NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

EXPLAINING DEMOCRATIC INSTABILITY IN THAILAND 1992–2011

by

Zackery T. Williams

September 2012

Thesis Advisor:	Michael S. Malley
Second Reader:	Sandra R. Leavitt

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

1. AGENCY USE ONLY *(Leave blank)*	2. REPORT DATE September 2012	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's Thesis	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Explaining Democratic Instability in Thailand 1992–2011		**5. FUNDING NUMBERS**	
6. AUTHOR(S) Zackery T. Williams			
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000		**8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER**	
9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A		**10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER**	

11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government. IRB Protocol number _____N/A_____.

12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited	12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE A

13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)
While Thailand has a long history of military-led coups, most observers believed that the establishment of democracy in 1992 had put the country on a new course. It had not. In 2006, the military overthrew the elected government and attempted to reshape the country's political system in order to favor its interests and those of its civilian and royal allies. This symbolized a period of instability and mass protest, which started nine months earlier, continues today, and had been unseen since the 1970s. The purpose of this thesis is to explain why Thai politics took this unexpected turn. Its main hypothesis is that political instability is a result of increased political and societal polarization that has its roots in the 1980s and 1990s, and which peaked during the early 2000s under the government of Thaksin Shinawatra and the Thai Rak Thai Party. This thesis shows that constitutional changes in the late 1990s led to a sharp increase in polarization because they encouraged the emergence of a two-party system. It concludes that while Thailand did, in fact, become more democratic in the 1990s, it also became more deeply divided, leading to instability. The stage was set for a coup and political instability when opponents of the traditional elites were elected, while the monarchy and military remained beyond the control of elected politicians.

14. SUBJECT TERMS Thailand, Thailand Military, Coup d'état, Civil-Military Relations, Democratic Transition, Democratic Consolidation, Political Polarization			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 87
			16. PRICE CODE

17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

**EXPLAINING DEMOCRATIC INSTABILITY IN THAILAND
1992–2011**

Zackery T. Williams
2nd Lieutenant., United States Air Force
B.S., United States Air Force Academy, 2011

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES
(CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
September 2012**

Author: Zackery T. Williams

Approved by: Michael S. Malley, Ph.D.
               Thesis Advisor

               Sandra R. Leavitt, Ph.D.
               Second Reader

               Daniel J. Moran, Ph.D.
               Chair, Department of National Security Affairs

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

ABSTRACT

While Thailand has a long history of military-led coups, most observers believed that the establishment of democracy in 1992 had put the country on a new course. It had not. In 2006, the military overthrew the elected government and attempted to reshape the country's political system in order to favor its interests and those of its civilian and royal allies. This event symbolized a period of instability and mass protest, which began nine months earlier and had been unseen since the 1970s. The purpose of this thesis is to explain why Thai politics took this unexpected turn. Its main hypothesis is that political instability is a result of increased political and societal polarization that has its roots in the 1980s and 1990s, and which peaked during the early 2000s under the government of Thaksin Shinawatra and the Thai Rak Thai Party. This thesis shows that constitutional changes in the late 1990s led to a sharp increase in polarization because they encouraged the emergence of a two-party system. It concludes that while Thailand did, in fact, become more democratic in the 1990s, it also became more deeply divided. The stage was set for a coup and political instability when opponents of the traditional elites were elected, while the monarchy and military remained beyond the control of elected politicians.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CDA	Constitutional Drafting Assembly
CNS	Council for National Security
EC	Election Commission
NCCC	National Counter-Corruption Commission
NPKC	National Peacekeeping Committee
PAD	People's Alliance for Democracy
PPP	People's Power Party
PTP	Pheu Thai Party
TRT	Thai Rak Thai
UDD	United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many thanks to Professor Michael Malley, my Thesis Advisor, for his mentorship throughout the whole process. This has been a great leaning experience and I thank you for all your help. Thank you also to Sandra Leavitt for your support as the Second Reader. I would also like to thank my wife, Cassi, for all her love, patience, and support during our time here in Monterey.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

I.   INTRODUCTION

A.   MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

In the last several years, political instability has increased sharply in Thailand. While Thailand has had a history of military-led coups, many observers believed that the establishment of democracy in 1992 had put the country on a new course. It had not. Since 2006, ideological divides between Red Shirts, who support Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai (TRT) Party, and Yellow Shirts, who oppose the TRT Party and are supported by the Democrat Party, continue over the legitimacy of governments and have led to mass protests, and at times, violence. Changes in the parliament's relations with the monarchy and the military present challenges that have yet to be resolved. Military intervention in politics, while thought to be a thing of the past, remains a threat to the consolidation of democracy.

Given the relatively long time span between the 1991 and 2006 coups, observers began to think that democracy had been consolidated in Thailand. A new regime was crafted to help create and sustain stability within the political arena. While military coups have been a constant part of Thailand's history, with over 18 occurring since the formation of its constitutional monarchy in 1932, many observers believed that the formation of a democratic regime would end the military's overt intervention in politics and create a stable form of government. Scholars of democratic transition and consolidation saw Thailand moving steadily toward democracy and away from authoritarian rule.

In 2006, all of this changed. With over fifteen years having passed since the last coup, the military once again blatantly intervened in politics, forming a military-led government and removing Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and his Thai Rak Thai Party from power. This event was surprising, as only a couple months before the coup, "few analysts foresaw Thailand's political situation deteriorating into a coup d'état."[1] But

---

1 Colum Murphy, "For King and Country?" *Wall Street Journal*, September 21, 2006, Eastern Edition.

even after the military returned the government to civilian elected officials in 2007, the problems associated with democratic instability did not go away. This development is significant in Thai history, as the return of power to parliamentary government following past coups in Thai history did not lead to this level of instability. After almost six years following the 2006 coup, the country remains unstable. This thesis aims to answer the following question: What has caused democratic instability in Thailand since the 1991 coup?

B.   IMPORTANCE

Scholars of Thai politics have yet to pinpoint the reasons behind Thailand's continued instability. While many thought Thailand had consolidated democracy between 1992 and 2006, the fact that a coup occurred proved otherwise. Academics continue to study the reasons for the coup and how democracy within Thailand may look in the future. The complex mix of multiple actors involved in governmental affairs suggests several explanations as to why there continues to be political instability. However, no definitive answer has been presented.

Since the election of Yingluck Shinawatra in 2011, there has been steady talk about the possibility of another coup occurring. Political instability remains, despite the military returning power to elected officials in 2007. While the time frame from 1992–2006 is seen as phases of democratic advancement, a military coup in September 2006 interrupted this development, showing that despite steady efforts to consolidate democracy in the country, there remained the possibility of military intervention in politics. This possibility remains evident today.

Lastly, Thailand has been a key regional partner of the United States for the past 60 years. As instability continues within Thai politics and society, impacting civil-military relations, interactions between the parliament, the monarchy, and the civilian elites, Thailand's relationship with the United States has become more complicated. A stable Thailand is strategically important to the United States due to its status as a U.S.

treaty ally and as an anchor for U.S. interests in mainland Southeast Asia.[2] In the near future, the United States must deal with how to respond and continue to balance its strategic needs with its imperative to remain a champion of democracy in the region, however messy that democracy may be.[3]

C.   PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES

Scholars of Thai politics have offered two complementary explanations for the political instability that led to the 2006 coup. One has to do with the 1997 constitution. Some scholars argue that the new constitution had unforeseen consequences within the political arena.[4] While the 1997 constitution attempted to address many of the political challenges that prevented governmental stability in Thailand in the 1980s and first half of the 1990s, some academics argue that it created the conditions that made a subsequent coup more likely. Prior to the 1991 coup there were a large number of parties that won seats in parliament. This led to a severely fragmented parliament, difficulties in forming and maintaining coalition governments, and frequent changes of government. Indeed, prior to 2005, no government had ever survived a full term in office. One of the primary objectives of the 1997 constitution was to limit the number of political parties that could win seats in parliament. In this regard, the constitution achieved its goal. In Thailand's 2001 and 2005 parliamentary elections, far fewer parties won seats than in previous elections. The constitution also increased the prime minister's influence over the legislature and created incentives for small, regional parties to coordinate their election campaigns. In combination, these changes to the political system enabled the Thai Rak Thai Party to become the first in Thai history to secure an outright majority in parliament.

With support from his majority party, Prime Minister Thaksin was able to push most of his agendas through parliament. As competition decreased, the executive

---

2 U.S. Congressional Research Service, "Thailand: Background and U.S. Relations" (RL32593; Dec. 8, 2011), by Emma Chanlett-Avery.

3 Ibid., 1.

4 Allen Hicken, "Party Fabrication: Constitutional Reform and the Rise of Thai Rak Thai," *Journal of East Asian Studies* 6, no. 3 (2006); Erik Kuhonta, "The Paradox of Thailand's 1997 'People's Constitution': Be Careful What You Wish For," *Asian Survey* 48, no. 3 (2008); James Ockey, "Change and Continuity in the Thai Political Party System," *Asian Survey* 43, no. 4 (2003).

branch's power increased. The military and monarchy were considerably less able to influence Thaksin and keep him in check as they had with many of his predecessors.[5] Thaksin drew allegations from the historically dominant Democrat Party and related new street-protesting Yellow Shirts, such as abuse of power, insulting the monarchy, policy corruption favoring sectional interests, exceptional levels of vote buying, human rights abuses, and interference in the independent agencies of the state.

The second common explanation for increasing instability in Thai politics prior to 2006 concerns the close relationship between the military and the monarchy, which found their positions increasingly challenged by the Thai Rak Thai Party and its leader, Prime Minister Thaksin. As mentioned above, the Thai military has a long history of overthrowing governments, even other military ones. The reasons for each coup have varied over time. However, many scholars agree that the preservation of military autonomy remains the most important factor, and this concern seems to have been especially strong in 2006.[6] The 1997 constitution, while supported by the military, reduced military participation in politics.[7] For instance, participation of active duty officers in the cabinet ended and representation of military officers in the Senate declined substantially.[8] This consequently reduced the military's ability to sustain its political influence in government and, in turn, its autonomy. Complicating matters, Thaksin chose to exercise control over the military directly by becoming involved in military promotions that were viewed as nepotism and disdainful of tradition and merit. As Thaksin continued to gain control over the military, the more he created polarization between two groups: One side included Thaksin,

---

5 Federico Ferrara, "Thailand: Minimally Stable, Minimally Democratic," International Political Science Review 32, no. 5 (2011), 524.

6 Paul Chambers, "Where Agency Meets Structure: Understanding Civil-Military Relations in Contemporary Thailand," *Asian Journal of Political Science* 19, no. 3 (2011); Federico Ferrara, "Thailand: Minimally Stable, Minimally Democratic," *International Political Science Review* 32, no. 5 (2011); Duncan McCargo, "Network Monarchy and Legitimacy Crises in Thailand," *The Pacific Review* 18, no. 4 (2005).

7 Amy Freedman, *Political Change and Consolidation: Democracy's Rocky Road in Indonesia, South Korea, and Malaysia* (Gordonsville: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 50.

8 Aurel Croissant, David Kuehn and Philip Lorenz, "Breaking with the Past?: Democratic Change and the Quest for Civilian Control in East Asia." *East West Center Policy Studies* 62, (2012), 29.

his Thai Rak Thai Party, and the national police, and, on the other side, the majority of the military, monarchy, and Democrats.

Today, academics point to the monarchy as a key source of the military's legitimacy in politics. As long as the monarchy remains strong and continues to support the military and vice versa, civilian control over the military will be difficult. The result is likely continued military participation in politics and the threat of a coup if the status quo of military autonomy or monarchical popularity is challenged or changed.

This thesis hypothesizes that polarization has caused political instability in Thailand beginning shortly after Thaksin's election in 2001. The polarization was between two coalitions of forces. On the one hand are the Thai Rak Thai Party and their supporters in the streets, the Red Shirts; and, on the other hand, are the Democrat Party, military, monarchy, and Yellow Shirts. As long as the polarization exists, the prospect for further instability and coups will remain significant.

D.   LITERATURE REVIEW

During the "third wave" of global democratization, more than 60 countries shifted from authoritarian rule toward some kind of democratic regime.[9] Academics who studied these transitions realized that sustaining democracy was often a task as difficult as establishing it. They adopted the term "democratic consolidation" to describe "the challenge of making new democracies secure, of extending their life expectancy beyond the short term, of making them immune against the threat of authoritarian regression, of building dams against eventual 'reverse waves.'"[10] This definition has become more complex over time, as academics identify multiple elements needed for successful democratization. Nevertheless, scholars generally agree that consolidated democracies share certain key characteristics, including internal stability, free and fair elections, civilian control of the military, rule of law, protection of human rights, and separation of institutional powers.

---

9 Andreas Schedler, "What is Democratic Consolidation," in *The Global Divergence of Democracies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

10 Ibid., 149.

Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan created a narrower definition of democratic consolidation that combines attitudinal, constitutional and behavioral dimensions.[11] Attitudinally, "a democratic regime is consolidated when a strong majority of public opinion holds the belief that democratic procedures and institutions are the most appropriate way to govern collective life in a society."[12] According to Larry Diamond, the consolidation of democracy requires "broad and deep legitimation, such that all significant political actors, at both the elite and mass levels, believe that the democratic regime is the most right and appropriate for their society, better than any other realistic alternative they can imagine."[13] In a survey conducted in 2004, 84.3 percent of Thai citizens stated that democracy is always preferable to authoritarian forms of government and over 90 percent indicated confidence in the ability of democracy to solve problems of the nation.[14] These statistics show that from an attitudinal perspective, Thailand had a consolidated democracy leading up to the 2006 coup.

Constitutionally, "a democratic regime is consolidated when governmental and nongovernmental forces alike, throughout the territory of the state, become subjected to, and habituated to, the resolution of conflict within the specific laws, procedures, and institutions sanctioned by the new democratic process."[15] Constitutionally, Thailand was a consolidated democracy leading up to the 2006 coup. Within Thailand, the period between 1992 and 2001 was filled with government corruption, a steady refrain throughout Thai history and one that continues today. Not a single administration served a full term in office due to accusations by the opposition of repeat corruption violations. The 1997 constitution was designed to help eliminate corruption and vote buying through a number of reforms that strengthened monitoring institutions, political parties, and civil society. New constitutionally mandated independent government institutions were

---

11 Juan J. Linz, Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

12 Ibid., 6.

13 Larry Diamond "Is the Third Wave Over?" *Journal Of Democracy* 7, no. 3 (1996), 33.

14 Robert B. Albritton, Thawilwadee Bureekul, "Developing electoral Democracy in Developing Nations: Thailand," *A Comparative Survey of Democracy, Governance and Development*, Asian Barometer Project Office, 2004.

15 Linz and Stephan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, 6.

created to help fight problems with corruption and vote buying. These new institutions included the Election Commission (EC) which would monitor all elections for election fraud, the National Counter-Corruption Commission (NCCC) which would be responsible for investigating and prosecuting corruption petitions, and the Constitution Court, which would be used to conduct rulings on the constitutionality of actions or laws.[16] These new institutions added what Larry Diamond and Leonardo Morlino call "horizontal accountability."[17] However, despite these institutions attempting to do the jobs for which they were intended, they themselves have been accused of being overly accommodating toward particular political elites and of being subjective in who they chose to investigate and which elections they validate. The selection of members into these commissions are also claimed to have become partisan and political.[18]

The constitution also contained many reforms aimed at changing Thai politics within parliament and encouraging stability. As noted, it aimed at creating a more cohesive parliament with fewer parties. Due to incentives for smaller parties to join coalitions and coordinate election efforts, the number of parties decreased leading up to the 2001 election. Overall, major parties accepted the changes provided by the new constitution and conducted themselves according to its rules.

Behaviorally, "a democratic regime in a territory is consolidated when no actor spends significant resources attempting to achieve their objectives by creating a non-democratic regime or turning to violence."[19] Until a few years before the 2006 coup, behaviorally, Thailand can be seen as democratically consolidated.[20] However, there are elements that show a reversal of democratic consolidation as violence increased right before the coup and continued to increase after. Two "wars against drugs" in 2003 and

---

16 Kitti Prasirtsuk, "From Political Reform and Economic Crisis to Coup d'état in Thailand: The Twists and Turns of the Political Economy, 1997–2006," *Asian Survey* 47, no. 6 (2007), 880.

17 Larry Diamond, Leonardo Morlino, "An Overview," *Journal of Democracy* 15 no. 4 (2004), 24.

18 Freedman, *Political Change and Consolidation: Democracy's Rocky Road in Indonesia, South Korea, and Malaysia*, 55.

19 Linz and Stephan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, 6.

20 Freedman, *Political Change and Consolidation: Democracy's Rocky Road in Indonesia, South Korea, and Malaysia*, 10.

2005 saw over 4,000 extrajudicial killings, encouraged by the prime minister and carried out by the police, military, and influential people. The southern insurgency within three of five predominantly Muslim provinces was quiet in the 1990s, but intensified starting in 2004, in large part due to intra-governmental rivalries. Prime Minister Thaksin declared martial law in the insurgent provinces in January 2004 and later replaced martial law with an emergency decree in July 2005. Despite efforts to subdue violence in the region before and after the coup, the insurgency still exists today.

Other violence stems from the Red and Yellow Shirt conflict. Allegations of corruption arose following another Thaksin and Thai Rak Thai Party landslide victory in the 2005 elections. Leading up to the coup, The People's Alliance for Democracy, identified by their yellow shirts representing the color of the king, began peacefully protesting against Thaksin, accusing him of corruption, abuse of power, coming to and maintaining power illegally, and inadequate loyalty to the monarchy. Confrontations took place between Yellow Shirt protestors, and those hired to incite violence. Bombs exploded near Thaksin's car and outside the home of former prime minister and Privy Council member Prem Tinsulanond.

In March of 2009, following the coup and the return of a civilian-led government in 2007, Red Shirts began protesting. Formally known as the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship, the Red Shirts claim the military ousted an elected government in 2006 and that the subsequent government led by the Democrats came to power illegally. They called for the return of the Thai Rak Thai Party and its leader from self-imposed exile, and the dropping of his conviction charges of corruption. While protests began with a series of sit-ins outside government offices, protests escalated to violence. Clashes between military troops and protesters left nearly 100 people killed in April and May 2010. The polarization between Red and Yellow Shirts, formed by elites on both sides, contributed to increased violence and the reversal of democratic consolidation on behavioral dimensions.

Other scholars of Thai politics offer different explanations for the instability of democracy in Thailand. In their view, some of the main causes of instability include the history of military coups, persistent military autonomy from civilian control despite

elected civilian politicians controlling the government, and the military's traditional allegiance to the king, not the government. Civilian control is a main element of democratizing states. Samuel Huntington describes the ideal type of professional military force as being best served under the balance of military and civilian control.[21] He states that, "The antithesis of objective civilian control is military participation in politics: civilian control decreases as the military become progressively involved in institutional, class, and constitutional politics."[22] Without civilian control, militaries are also able to continue to act autonomously, preserving their status quo power. Within democratic states, civilian control over the military must be exercised so that the government, which is responsible for the defense of the nation, the state, and the democratic constitution, would be able to exercise its authority to maintain stability within its borders through rule of law.

Narcis Serra, former Spanish Minister of Defense between 1982 and 1991, explains the steps necessary to reduce the powers of armed forces during the process of a democratic transition.[23] He states that progress in democratic transitions must include changes within the military. These changes must include legal and institutional reforms, changes to the military career structure and doctrine, and control of conflict. Thailand has struggled with these elements during its democratic transition. When Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai in 1997 became the first civilian defense minister in 20 years, he was unable to implement most military reforms in the way they were intended.[24] He attempted to improve military efficiency and civilian oversight by reforming military promotion procedures, reorganizing the command structure, and reducing the high number of generals who did not have military duties. These changes were blocked by military veto.[25] At no time in the democratic period between 1992 and 2006 were

---

21 Samuel Huntington, *The Solider and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1957).

22 Ibid., 80.

23 Narcís Serra, *The Military Transition: Democratic Reform of the Armed Forces* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

24 Croissant, Kuehn and Lorenz, "Breaking With the Past?: Democratic Change and the Quest for Civilian Control in East Asia," 36–37.

25 Ibid., 45.

civilians able to "effectively steer core military and defense issues, such as the defense budget, weapons acquisition, arms deployment, force structure, and education and training."[26]

While former prime ministers have attempted to control the military, two main elements have prevented Thailand from building a civilian-led military. First, the military pledges its allegiance to the King and the protection of the monarchy, not the democratically elected government or constitution. According to Serra, "It goes without saying that the loyalty of the military to the democratic government is a basic feature of a stable democracy."[27] Duncan McCargo defines the relationship between Thailand's military and monarchy as a "network monarchy."[28] Leading up to the military coup, the executive branch under Prime Minister Thaksin was growing stronger due to the Thai Rak Thais' overwhelming majority in parliament. The strength of the executive threatened the traditional roles of the monarchy within politics. Recent prime ministers not backed by the palace, such as Banharn Silpa-archa and Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, only lasted a year or so in office; Thaksin, in contrast, remained in office for five years with strong parliamentary support.[29] The military, at the same time, was being threatened with increased civilian control and less political involvement. The relationship with the monarchy gave the military the legitimation to conduct a military coup against Thaksin and the Thai Rak Thai Party. This highlights that due to the historical allegiance to the King and the strength of the network monarchy, true civilian control over the military has been difficult.

Secondly, Thailand's history has been filled with military intervention in politics. In the modern era, there has never been a period of time in which the military has been removed from political affairs. While some interventions are through the form of military coups, others involve blurring the line between government and military with military

---

26 Ibid., 37.

27 Ibid., 30.

28 Duncan McCargo, "Network Monarchy and Legitimacy Crises in Thailand," *The Pacific Review* 18, no. 4 (2005): 499–519.

29 Ibid., 512.

leaders obtaining seats in parliament through election or appointment, becoming prime ministers following a coup, being appointed to key cabinet positions, organizing civilian militias, assisting with vote mechanics and security, maintaining an important role in economic development efforts, and obtaining legitimization for actions through its relationship with the monarchy.

The failure to separate the military from government creates many problems with strengthening a democracy. Narcis Serra states:

> Coups are a symptom of a sick democracy. And, in politics, as in medicine, one must fight the illness and not just the symptoms. This means that the aim of military policy must be the inclusion of the military within the structure of the new democratic state. It implies establishing the armed forces' relationship of dependency in respect of the government that is 'normal' in any consolidated democracy. Coups d'état will cease to be a threat to the extent that these policies are reinforced.[30]

The challenge of gaining civilian control over the military within Thailand will not go away any time soon. However, based on Serra's comments, without separation of the military from politics there is a strong that military autonomy will be preserved and the threat of a coup will remain. This has had, and will continue to have, a direct impact on the democratization of Thailand.

E.   METHODS AND SOURCES

This thesis will conduct a comparative study of Thailand's democratic process from 1992 to 2006 prior to the coup, and 2006 following the coup to 2011. This will be carried out through reviewing and analyzing the literature associated with these time frames found from scholars who write about democratic transitions and consolidations, civil-military relations, and Thai politics within the parliament, monarchy, and military. Primary sources within this thesis include the 1997 constitution and the 2007 constitution. Both of these documents are available to the public in English.

---

30 Serra, *The Military Transition: Democratic Reform of the Armed Forces*, 30.

F.   THESIS OVERVIEW

This thesis will proceed as follows. Chapter II will discuss the elements of democratic transition and consolidation following the 1991 coup. The topics include the relationship between the monarchy and the parliament, influences of civil-military relations, and democratic reform efforts made by political leaders. The influences of the 1997 Constitution, deemed the "People's Constitution," on Thai politics will also be presented in this chapter. This chapter will introduce the Privy Council and its relationship not only between the military and the King, but also its influence on democratic efforts within the parliament. The analysis of the interaction between these multiple actors will show a polarization within Thai politics being formed. Describing how Thai politics became increasingly polarized will elucidate the reasons attributed to the weakening of democracy. This chapter will also discuss the conditions leading up to the 2006 coup. Democratically elected Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, with the help of the 1997 constitution and his vast wealth, created a strong executive branch under his leadership, leading to high levels of corruption and an abuse of power within government. The network monarchy, losing its influence in Thai politics as Thaksin's power grew, saw the rising democratic leader's role in government as a threat to stability in Thailand. This resulted in a bloodless coup in 2006 which removed Thaksin and his Thai Rak Thai Party from power.

Chapter III will discuss the results of the 2006 coup and the steps taken since then to stabilize Thailand's democracy. The analysis of these steps will give multiple insights into the possibility of instability or stability in the future. This chapter will analyze the differences and similarities between the relationship of the monarchy, military and parliament prior to the coup and after. This chapter will also discuss the new constitution that was ratified after the coup and some of the differences and similarities it has with the 1997 constitution. Lastly, this chapter will discuss the polarized conflict between the Red Shirts and Yellow Shirts and their impact on Thai politics.

Chapter IV summarizes the findings and concludes whether or not they support the hypothesis, which is that polarization has caused political instability in Thailand

beginning shortly after Thaksin's election in 2001. This chapter analyzes the prospect for future democratic stability in Thailand and the impact of the 2006 coup on possible future military interventions in Thai politics. The conclusion, based on the analysis of pre-2006 coup democratic efforts and those made after the coup will shed light on the future of democracy and coups in Thailand.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

II. POLARIZATION AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION 1992–2006

A. INTRODUCTION

The 1980s depicted a time in which many viewed Thai politics to be on the path toward gradual democratization. However, all of this changed in the first couple years in the 1990s. On February 23, 1991, General Chatichai Choonhavan was removed as prime minister in a military coup. In the following election, the military attempted to maintain power within government by self-appointing an Army general as prime minister. In response to the military's overt attempt to control Thai politics, student-led protests broke out, leading to a crackdown by the military, which left 52 dead.[31] In the 1992 election, many hoped that Thai politics would stabilize and that a more democratic form of government would be founded.

The time period that followed, spanning from September 1992 to September 2006, is generally characterized as a period in Thai history in which democratic institutions and ideals strengthened. The military made shifts toward accepting civilian control and a new constitution was created in 1997 that significantly assisted in the democratic consolidation process. However, despite these efforts, it will be apparent that Thai politics became increasingly divided between those in office and civil society who were attempting to create a more democratic form of government, and the network monarchy, led by General Prem Tinsulanond, which continued to maintain its traditional influence in politics to preserve their interests. Furthermore, Thai society became more divided between the Bangkok middle class, which sought clean democratic governments, and provincial voters, who were willing to sell their votes in exchange for populist changes. This evolving polarization, deepened by Prime Minister Thaksin in his populist efforts to challenge the establishment and consolidate his own power, led to mass protests, followed by a military coup in 2006 that removed him from office.

---

31 John Pike, "February 1991 Coup," Global Security, http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/thailand/coup-1991.htm.

B. FROM CHUAN TO THAKSIN 1992–2006

1. 1992–1998: Slow, But Steady Progress in Democratization

Thailand in the 1980s was put on a path by the Prem government of world-leading economic growth rates and gradual democratization, both of which were considered important strategies for ending Thailand's communist insurgency. Rapid economic growth was achieved by improved market mechanisms that spurred double-digit annual growth rates in 1988 and 1989 and subsequently a larger middle class. The government's export-led growth strategy starting in 1984 resulted in a 17.8 percent growth in exports in 1985. Other economic changes included tighter budget ceilings, cautious external debt polities, tighter monetary and fiscal discipline, and increased efficiency in tax collection.

Economic success initially added significantly to political stability led by General Prem who was appointed as prime minister in 1980. Over his eight years in office, Prem was noted for his personal integrity and ability to preserve a balance between military and political parties.[32] During the 1980s two military coups failed, both attempting to reverse the democratization process and instill constitutions that would solidify the military's role in politics. These attempted coups failed due to the support General Prem enjoyed from the palace and the military and the increasing strength of political parties within government.[33]

As Thailand continued to grow economically, Prem's administration was able to facilitate the development of democratic norms among the Bangkok middle class. As the 1990s approached, prodemocracy groups increased their pressure for a more democratic form of government led by elected leaders. The elections in 1988 and 1992 demonstrated the increasing strength of elected politicians and the decline of influence by bureaucratic and military elites. Suchit Bunbongkarn states, "This development was possible because of the growing strength of civil society….The antimilitary and anti-Prem groups were more vocal in the 1988 election and gained more support from the urban-educated electorate, which believed that it was time for the military to step down and allow

---

32 Bunbongkarn, "Thailand's Successful Reforms," 55–56.

33 Ibid.

parliament to determine who governed."[34] In 1988, General Prem declined to remain prime minister after the election, paving the way for an elected member of the house to be appointed prime minister − General Chatichai.

General Chatichai was involved in money politics and widespread corruption during his term in office. Despite becoming popularly elected, corruption led to a decline in the government's legitimacy. On February 23, 1991, Chatichai was arrested during a military coup and an interim government was formed under Anand Panyarachun at the request of the King and General Prem, now a member of the Privy Council. Anand's interim government promised to create a new constitution and conduct parliamentary elections. On April 7, 1992, General Suchinda Kraprayoon, the leader of the National Peace Keeping Council (NPKC), which conducted the coup d'état in 1991, was appointed as prime minister. Despite initial public support by the Bangkok middle class during the coup and the months that followed, when Suchinda made himself prime minister, public support of the military diminished. His self-appointment was widely seen as a desperate effort on the part of the military to retain power.[35]

Student-led street protests erupted in Bangkok, and numbers eventually grew to over 200,000 by mid-May. The military responded by imposing curfews and deploying military personnel around the city. Between the 17th and 20th of May, the military reacted to the protests with a bloody crackdown, leaving 52 dead, hundreds of injuries, and over 3,500 arrests.[36] The military crackdown would later be known as the "Black May" massacre. King Bhumibol, in fear of a possible civil war, summoned Suchinda and General Srimuang, the leader of the pro-democracy movement, to a televised audience and urged them to end the conflict peacefully. Suchinda stepped down as prime minister days later and new general elections were held in September.

The continued strength of antimilitary groups, consisting mainly of Bangkok middle class citizens, was evident in the March 1992 election and throughout the mass

---

34 Suchit Bunbongkarn, "Elections and Democratization in Thailand," in *The Politics of Elections in Southeast Asia*, ed. R.H. Taylor (Stanford: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1996.), 190.

35 Bunbongkarn, "Thailand's Successful Reforms," 57.

36 Pike, "February 1991 Coup."

protests and crackdown by the military. In the second election that year, the so-called angel or prodemocracy parties, representing those who had participated in the antimilitary protests, were favored over the military-aligned parties under Suchinda. In September 1992, Chuan Leekpai, leader of the Democrat Party, was elected as prime minister.

Chuan's time in office is associated with multiple achievements that appeared to put Thailand back on the path of democratic consolidation. Chuan was a longtime leader of the Democrat Party and was known for his honest and moderate approach to politics. During his term in office, he experienced modest success in his efforts to strengthen democracy.[37] One of the most important steps toward democratization was the administration's effort to strengthen civilian control of the military. Following the events in "Black May," the military lost legitimacy and was forced out of a predominantly overt role in politics. William Case states, "The military thus retreated humbly to the barracks, though it retained a compensatory presence in some key state enterprises and corporate boardrooms."[38] The actions conducted by the military during the 1991 coup and the attempts to maintain political control afterward were undemocratic in nature, which furthered the loss of their legitimacy.[39] This gave the newly elected government the opportunity to pass several democratic changes to traditional civil-military relations without fear of intervention.

Ironically, another reason for Chuan's initial success with democratization was due to his relationship with the network monarchy. Network monarchy refers to the network-based politics and intervention into the political system by the monarchy and

---

37 Clark Neher, "Democratization in Thailand," *Asian Affairs* 21, no. 4 (1995).

38 William Case, *Politics in Southeast Asia: Democracy or Less* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 181.

39 Freedman, *Political Change and Consolidation: Democracy's Rocky Road in Indonesia, South Korea, and Malaysia*, 50.

military.[40] Following the direct approach to Thai politics that led to the military coup and the events during "Black May," the network monarchy realized that it needed to refine how it would remain influential in Thai politics. No longer could it rely on the intervention of Thai politics through the use of its military via military coups. The solution was to work behind the scenes, with the administrations that were elected into power to help ensure that the network monarchy's interests were achieved. This plan was conducted by General Prem, leader of the network monarchy, through his ability to create a working relationship with Chuan during his election campaign before he became prime minister. In a 1993 article in *Naeo Na*, the relationship between Prem and Chuan is described:

> Even if there is no formal disclosure, everyone can observe General Prem
> Tinsulanond….Because if we look closely, from the time when Chuan's
> government came into office, Prem has been an important person to whom
> the Democrat Party pays respect and constantly asks advice.[41]

Duncan McCargo claims that, in the view of King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the core achievement of the network monarchy lay in securing a high degree of relative autonomy for the monarchy within Thailand's increasingly pluralist order.[42] Through Prem as a proxy, the monarchy was able to maintain its grasp on Thai politics through its working relationship with Chuan and the Democrat Party. The military was also able to maintain relative autonomy. While the military publicly pledged its support to democratically elected governments, military elites saw Prem as the link to political elites and party leaders. The military was also still able to defend its political and institutional autonomy

---

40 Duncan McCargo defines the main features of the network monarchy from 1980 to 2001 as follows: "the monarch was the ultimate arbiter of political decisions in times of crisis; the monarchy was the primary source of national legitimacy; the King acted as a didactic commentator on national issues, helping to set the national agenda, especially through his annual birthday speeches; the monarch intervened actively in political developments, largely by working through proxies such as privy councilors and trusted military figures; and the lead proxy, former army commander and prime minister Prem Tinsulanond, helped determine the nature of coalition governments, and monitored the process of military and other promotions."

41 McCargo, "Network Monarchy and Legitimacy Crises in Thailand," 509.

42 Ibid., 501.

through its continued representation of active-duty officers within the Senate.[43] Overall, the relationship between Prem, the monarchy, the military, and the Democrat Party ensured that despite the strengthening of democracy in Thai politics, they could maintain enough influence to preserve their institutional autonomy.

The Chuan administration also maintained support from the monarchy, military, and civilian population in large part due to a high economic growth rate in the early 1990s. Due to the rise of people's standard of living, Thai citizens remained supportive of the government, giving Chuan's administration a "cushion" to make important changes for Thailand.[44] The administration developed many key policies to include: an emphasis on national economic stability, decentralization of the administrative powers to the rural provinces, fostering income growth, and opportunity and economic development distribution to the regions.

Political stability was also enhanced due to the new international era in which no outside powers threatened Thai sovereignty and no internal insurgency risked domestic stability. These elements mitigated the military's possible motivation to intervene in Thai politics by staging another coup. With the military considerably less involved in politics, the Chuan government could focus on the continued democratic consolidation of the state. Further advancements in democratization included constitutional amendments that provided for more wide-ranging democratic practices, enlargement of the House of Representatives, reducing the size of the appointed Senate, lowering of the voting age from 20 to 18 years of age, passing of reforms that improved equality for women, and establishment of an administrative court.[45]

Evidence of other pro-democratic elements was found in civil society's relationship with the Chuan administration. Specific organizations were established to voice the opinions and requests of those in middle and lower classes with the expectation

---

43 Croissant, Kuehn and Lorenz, "Breaking With the Past?: Democratic Change and the Quest for Civilian Control in East Asia," 18.

44 Neher, "Democratization in Thailand," 208.

45 One World Nations Online, "History of Thailand," Guide to the Countries of the World: Nations Online Project, http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/History/Thailand-history.htm (accessed November 27, 2011); Neher, "Democratization in Thailand," 208.

that the government would listen and respond. The "Assembly of the Poor," a nongovernmental organization (NGO), prided itself on organizing rural villagers in the northeast to more effectively connect specific local grievances to national government policies. Newly formed civil society organizations that were formed around issues of environmental problems, economic and social injustice, inequity in the distribution of land for agricultural use, and unbalanced development. By creating a link between policies created by the government, and the opinions of the citizens being affected by them, there were greater chances for more effective programs to be drafted and implemented.[46]

However, despite new relationships between NGOs and the government, the rise of Chuan into power also depicts a growing divide between Bangkok's middle class and lower class provincial voters. Elections are important for a democracy due to the institutionalization of mass participation in the governing process. Since 1932, voter turnout has been increasing, averaging approximately 60 percent in the 1986, 1988, 1992 general elections. However, the increasing importance of Thai society in politics has also created a gap between "democratic idealism and actual practices."[47] There is a divide between Bangkok middle class citizens, who generally have a higher level of political awareness and knowledge, and lower class provincial citizens who tend to have a lower level of political awareness, knowledge, and alternatives. People with more education, higher incomes, and white-collar or professional occupations tend to be more politically aware and tend to understand better how to influence the government. Among these types of citizens voter turnout is argued to be higher than lower class citizens when looking at other democracies.[48] What makes Thailand unique in this sense is that voter turnout by middle class citizens in Bangkok, the most highly developed and most modern city of the Kingdom, is lowest when compared to rates in the rest of the country. There has been an increasing trend of higher voter turnouts in the less politically aware lower class provinces.

---

46 Bunbongkarn, "Thailand's Successful Reforms," 65–66.

47 Bunbongkarn, "Elections and Democratization in Thailand," 192.

48 Ibid.

Voter turnout in Thailand's less developed rural provinces has been increasing due to the mobilization activities of politicians in their areas, especially by a new class of politician: recently wealthy business leaders. Due to their low level of education, political awareness, and income, rural voters may be more easily incentivized in how they vote by local leaders, influential candidates, political parties, or government officials.[49] Evidence can be found from elections starting in 1983 in which the Ministry of Interior instructed district officers to encourage voters to cast ballots in return for a set reward for the district with the highest turnout. Other evidence can be found in the form of increased vote buying. Rather than seen as a nondemocratic practice as perceived by the Bangkok middle class, these lower class voters do not see vote buying as a bribe. Rather they often reason, "What we have received is like getting some modest gifts upon purchasing quality merchandise."[50] Lastly, mobilization is increased by the connection between the candidate and the local province. According to Anek Laothamatas:

> Most recent studies find that [rural] voters pick politicians who visit them regularly; who help them cope with difficult personal or family problems...who regularly attend social functions at the village level; who make generous donations to neighborhood monasteries or schools; and who bring in public programs that generate jobs, money, and reputation for their villages and provinces.[51]

This means that rural voters tend to care less about the election platform of the candidates, their party affiliation, or their integrity as members of the house or of the cabinet.

In contrast, Bangkok voters tend to vote more for a party than for individuals, where the party attachment of the candidates, party policies and ideology, and national and international issues are considered.[52] Bangkok's middle class voters are not as materially dependent upon their politicians and thus when they vote they do so on the

---

49 Ibid., 194.

50 Anek Laothamatas, "A Tale of Two Democracies: Conflicting Perceptions of Elections and Democracy in Thailand," in *The Politics of Elections in Southeast Asia*, ed. R.H. Taylor (Stanford: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1996,) 208.

51 Ibid., 206.

52 Bunbongkarn, "Elections and Democratization in Thailand," 196.

basis of their values and interests. They usually do not need the small amounts of money that could come from vote buying, thus strengthening their commitment to free and fair elections. Despite these independent voters in Bangkok being politically aware, voter turnout there has remained relatively low. While many Bangkok voters believe that they participate in elections because it is their responsibility to do so as a citizen, most argue that, despite voting, they have not had an impact on choosing the government in previous elections. An increase in voting by those in the provinces where 70 percent of the population resided was decreasing the influence traditionally held by those in Bangkok.

Despite the progressive reforms that the Chuan administration was making, from 1992 to 1995 the prime minister was highly criticized by competing political parties and Thai citizens over a land reform project that was allegedly rife with corruption. New evidence found in a government document named "Sor.Por.Kor. 4–01" illuminated not only the progress of the land reform program, but it also showed that several wealthy Thai families on the resort island of Phuket had benefited from the governmental land reform program that was intended to redistribute land to poor farmers.[53] Given that Chuan had consistently insisted on honesty and integrity in government, the scandal was seen by the Bangkok middle class and press as an "intolerable betrayal."[54] While Chuan was never found to be directly involved in the scandal, he faced a no-confidence vote in parliament following Deputy Prime Minister Chamlong Srimuang's announcement of his party's withdrawal from the five-party coalition government. Following an announcement of a future snap election, Chuan stated, "Therefore the best way [to resolve the recent events] is to return power to the people and let them consider what is best."[55] The parliament was officially dissolved on May 19, 1995.

Two months later, a general election was held and Mr. Banharn Silpa-archa, Thai Nation Party Leader, was appointed prime minister. While Banharn was only in power

---

53 Philip Shenon, "Thai Government Collapses In a Land-Reform Scandal," *The New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/1995/05/20/world/thai-government-collapses-in-a-land-reform-scandal.html (accessed November 27, 2011).

54 David Murray, "The 1995 National Elections in Thailand: A Step Backward for Democracy?" *Asian Survey* 36, no. 4 (1996), 364.

55 Philip Shenon, "Thai Government Collapses In a Land-Reform Scandal."

for a year, some academics evaluate his time in office as a step backward for democracy.[56] They compared Banharn to the elected government of Chatichai Choonhavan that was ousted by a bloodless coup in February 1991 on allegations of corrupt practices.[57] Many of the same members of Chatichai's government reappeared in ministerial positions under Banharn. Throughout the election period prior to becoming prime minister, Banharn's party was accused of buying votes to ensure its victory. Some reports show that a whole village was being bought for between 100,000 and 200,000 baht (US$4,000 to $8,000).[58] The PollWatch organization, which had overseen the past two elections, reported that it received 2,268 election-related complaints. Despite the police arresting 106 people for vote buying, the bureaucracy and PollWatch officials were unable to ensure a clean election. While the election did occur, resulting in Banharn as prime minister, a large portion of the public considered him corrupt, which led to the weakening of his administration's legitimacy from the start of his term.

With Banharn in charge, the divide deepened. For the lower class citizens in provinces around the country, Banharn was the better political candidate when compared to the Democrat Party that had not delivered as fully as they would have liked when it came to land reform. Bangkok middle class citizens, on the other hand, viewed the Banharn government as nondemocratic, since it came into power through vote buying. Furthermore, continued allegations of corruption added to their view that the Banharn government could not be seen as trustworthy or legitimate. *The Nation* newspaper following the election reported, "The clock has been set backwards for Thai democracy with the reemergence of the old-style politicians."[59] This view was shared by the monarchy. Following the announcement of the members of Banharn's cabinet, it was clear that most appointments were based on reward for loyalty and financial contributions rather than capability, honesty, or experience. During the swearing-in ceremony, the King told the ministers, "You have become ministers legitimately, so now you must work to

---

56 Murray, "The 1995 National Elections in Thailand: A Step Backward for Democracy?," 372.

57 Ibid., 374; This conversion rate was presented in David Murray's article, published in 1996

58 Murray, "The 1995 National Elections in Thailand: A Step Backward for Democracy?"

59 Ibid., 372.

keep legitimacy. This means your work must be legally and morally right."[60] Not surprisingly, this did not happen. During the month of August, the King appeared on television almost nightly to denounce the country's politicians for their venality and self-interest.

While it was clear that the monarchy did not support Banharn, it was unable to prevent him from becoming elected. This highlighted that the monarchy might be losing its influence in Thai politics. Duncan McCargo states, "The rise of Banharn demonstrated that the monarchy lacked the power to block such politicians from becoming prime minister. Nevertheless, the monarchy did not hesitate to undermine elected prime ministers of whom it disapproved."[61] Banharn's administration did not stay in power long. On September 27, 1996, Bunharn left office when concordance in his administration had diminished as a result of multiple corruption scandals that had occurred during his term. One corruption scandal gave him the nickname of "Mr. ATM" when he was accused of being a politician who dispensed dirty money under the table to those who requested it.[62]

Two months later, elections were again held and retired general Chavalit Yongchaiyudh was appointed prime minister. Repeating the corrupt practices that occurred before, this election was also infected with vote buying. Reports from T*he New York Times* found entire polling stations were being bought for 80,000 to 100,000 baht (US$3,200 to $4,000). It seemed that direct payoffs to voters were becoming a more prominent part of election campaigns in Thailand. Mechai Viravaidya, a former government minister stated, "I call it commercial democracy, the purchased mandate. We have applied capitalism to everything, including democracy."[63] Despite many claims of an unfair election, Chavalit was appointed prime minister.

---

60 Ibid., 373.

61 McCargo, "Network Monarchy and Legitimacy Crises in Thailand," 509.

62 Thailand For You, "Who is Banharn Silpa-archa," Who's Who in Thai Politics, http://www.th4u.com/banharn_silpa-archa.htm (accessed November 27, 2011).

63 Seth Mydans, "Thai Civics: New Leader, but Votes Are Still for Sale - New York Times," *The New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/1996/11/19/world/thai-civics-new-leader-but-votes-are-still-for-sale.html?ref=chavalityongchaiyudh (accessed November 27, 2011).

The Chavalit government took control of a country that had been on a steep economic rise for the past eight years and a steady increase since the early 1980s, but all of that changed a few short months later. Thailand's real gross domestic product (GDP) had grown by 8–13 percent per year between 1987 and 1995, one of the fastest growth rates in the world. Thailand's economic growth would decline markedly with the Asian financial crisis that began in July 1997. Thailand's crisis began when the combination of its recent success, high domestic interest rates and fixed exchange rates led to destabilizing inflows of short-term capital. This occurred after Thailand liberalized its capital account and set up an international banking center in Bangkok. According to Jonathan Leightner, these short-term capital inflows helped Thailand's banks but hurt its finance and securities companies. He states, "When Thailand's finance and securities companies started to fail, international expectations plummeted, short-term capital inflows dried up, and Thailand was forced to float its currency," bringing with it a sharp devaluation of the Thai baht.[64]

In an attempt to help the country rebound from its economic downfall, Chavalit made several promises to banks, businesses and investors. On August 19, 1997, Thailand accepted US$17.2 billion from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. The IMF imposed strict conditions on Thailand receiving the money, to include the country agreeing to restructure its financial sector and to not rescue any more of its financial institutions. Other conditions included a one baht per liter tax on oil products. The currency devaluation and many of the IMF-imposed conditions were painful for Thais from all walks of life; however, those at the lowest end of the economic spectrum were least able to absorb the shock. After a time, most Thai citizens did not believe that the economy was improving. With Thais losing faith in the prime minister's ability to turn the country's economy around, the finance minister suddenly resigned. Chavalit, a former army general, enjoyed close relations with the military, and the military seemed to try to head off political instability by initially backing his government during the economic crisis. Despite this, Chavalit's inability to effectively tackle the economic

---

    64 Jonathan Leightner, "Globalization and Thailand's Financial Crisis," *Journal of Economic Issues* 33, no. 2 (1999), 367.

problems eventually led to the military's support of his resignation.[65] One month later, on November 3, 1997, Chavalit resigned.[66]

Despite the economic crisis and subsequent downfall of Chavalit, under his administration a new "People's Constitution" was ratified. Scholars believe that the financial crisis created the urgency to draft and pass a new constitution capable of reforming Thai politics in a way that could help create stability. Amy Freedman states, "There is no question that the financial crisis of July 1997 served as a catalyst for the passage of the new constitution. Afraid of further political chaos, domestic and international investors withdrew until they felt reassured that political reforms would go forward and that politics would stabilize…."[67] The events associated with the economic crisis gave way to the discrediting of old ways of conducting business and politics in Thailand, giving importance to the passing of a new constitution that could create a new political system.

2.   The 1997 "People's Constitution"

Eighteen constitutions have been passed since 1932 in Thailand. The majority of these constitutions have been drafted and ratified under military control. Since the country became a constitutional monarchy in 1932, a vicious cycle of elections, instability, and military coups has led to political elites in power using constitutional reform to legitimize whatever regime they put in place, even if the changes were insignificant. In the early 1990s, the gradual opening of democracy eventually led to the drafting of a new constitution through a more inclusive process that sought to alter the governance system in terms of executive stability, accountability and participation.[68] While many Thai citizens and governmental officials expected a constitution to be created shortly after the first election following the coup, it was not drafted and passed

---

65 Freedman, *Political Change and Consolidation: Democracy's Rocky Road in Indonesia, South Korea, and Malaysia*, 45.

66 Leightner, "Globalization and Thailand's Financial Crisis," 367.

67 Freedman, *Political Change and Consolidation: Democracy's Rocky Road in Indonesia, South Korea, and Malaysia*, 47.

68 Bjorn Dressel, "Thailand's Elusive Quest for a Workable Constitution, 1997–2007," *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs* 31, no. 2 (2009), 297.

until 1997. Bjorn Dressel states, "Dissatisfaction with the poor functioning of Thai democracy and the rise of money-based electoral politics underpinned the demands for constitutional reform in the 1990s; there was a sense that the reform process had been stalled in Parliament by traditional interests and self-interested politicians."[69] The entire country was becoming more politically educated and aware.

On October 11, 1997, a new constitution, known to Thais as "The People's Constitution," was ratified. While many years in the making, the document was drafted by a 99-person elected Constitutional Drafting Assembly (CDA) over a period of eight months. It was the first of its kind in Thai history to reflect extensive public consultation, which was encouraged and facilitated by the King. Thai media aired numerous television talk shows and public fora in an effort to obtain public opinions and inputs on what should be contained within the new constitution. According to the CDA's Public Opinion and Public Hearing Committee, over 850,000 people were consulted throughout the country and more than 300 organizations participated in the drafting process.[70] Overall, the new constitution according to Suchitra Punyaratabandhu represented a "victory of democracy groups over supporters of the old political system based on clique politics."[71]

One of the top public responses when asked about what should change within Thai politics was the influence of money. Money politics had become the root of many problems in Thai politics such as the fragmented party system, endemic corruption, and unstable governing coalitions.[72] The weak party system stemmed from the common struggle of political elites attempting to gain more wealth and power. Suchit Bunbongkarn states that, "In most of the major parties, businessmen-turned-politicians who provide financial support always demand top posts and cabinet seats…since they

---

69 Ibid., 300.

70 Ibid., 301.

71 Suchitra Punyaratabandhu, "Thailand in 1997: Financial Crisis and Constitutional Reform," *Asian Survey* 38, no. 2 (1998), 165.

72 Bunbongkarn, "Thailand's Successful Reforms," 56.

spend so much money to be elected, political leaders feel they have to seize any opportunity to 'recoup their investment.'"[73] This undoubtedly led to increased corruption within the Thai government.

Several of the provisions of the 1997 constitution were designed to create a party system that would significantly lessen corruption and vote-buying. This, in part, was accomplished through the creation and strengthening of monitoring systems. The constitution mandated three new, independent bodies that would help provide a strong system of checks-and-balances.[74] Through the Election Commission (EC), all elections, at the national and local level would be monitored by the EC and civil society for election fraud. This would not only help decrease overall complaints about fraud, but would also serve to legitimize the election period and the new party and leader taking office. The five-member EC was also given the authority to annul the results of elections where fraud or other abuses were confirmed and call new ones. The second agency created was the National Counter-Corruption Commission (NCCC). Composed of nine members, the NCCC replaced the former, less independent Counter-Corruption Committee, which was known to be prone to political influence. The NCCC would be responsible for investigating corruption petitions and prosecuting those that were known to be corrupt. Finally, the third agency, the Constitutional Court, would conduct rulings on the constitutionality of actions and laws, thus promoting rule of law, a key component of a strong democracy.[75]

Another area of reform focused on the institutional structure of the Thai government. The primary goal was to ensure that governments would have significantly greater stability and staying power. This was achieved by weakening the ties between the executive and legislative branches, paired with the institutionalization of political

---

73 Ibid.

74 Kuhonta, "The Paradox of Thailand's 1997 'People's Constitution': Be Careful What You Wish For," 374.

75 Prasirtsuk, "From Political Reform and Economic Crisis to Coup d'état in Thailand: The Twists and Turns of the Political Economy, 1997–2006," 880.

parties.[76] In an effort to encourage party cohesion and greater voter equality, the number of seats in the House of Representatives was increased from 392 to 500, with 400 of these elected from single-member districts.[77] The other 100 members would be elected under a party-list system in a single national constituency. The constitution also introduced a fully elected Senate, differing from the traditional system by which senators were appointed by the prime minister. Lastly, the new constitution also changed many elements of the party system. The constitution maintained the requirement of party membership for candidates. Parties that receive fewer than five percent of the party-list votes receive no list tier seats. Party switching was also tightened, requiring that a candidate be a confirmed member of a political party for at least 90 days prior to an election in order to be eligible to run. Lastly, members of parliament who serve in a cabinet position were required to surrender their seats in the House.[78]

The constitution also had an impact on the military. Following the events of 1991, military representation in the senate began to decline. While it was clear that the military was becoming less directly involved in politics and beginning to professionalize, it had always maintained a small representation of active or retired military within the senate. However, under the new constitution, senators had to be elected rather than appointed by the prime minister. Military appointees had begun to drop in the 1990s, decreasing from 154 out of 270 senators (57 percent of seats) from 1992–1996, to 48 out of 260 senators (18 percent of seats) between 1996–2000. These numbers represent a 39 percent drop in military-appointed senate seats and, importantly, eliminate the military's majority in this legislative body. By the first election under the 1997 constitution in 2001, only two percent of new senators were ex-military. These numbers represent the notion that military presence in the government, while traditionally strong, was beginning to

---

76 Kuhonta, "The Paradox of Thailand's 1997 'People's Constitution': Be Careful What You Wish For," 380.

77 Case, *Politics in Southeast Asia: Democracy or Less*, 186.

78 Hicken, "Party Fabrication: Constitutional Reform and the Rise of Thai Rak Thai," 384–38.; Kuhonta, "The Paradox of Thailand's 1997 'People's Constitution': Be Careful What You Wish For," 380–381.

decrease in the 1990s.[79] Furthermore, despite the possibility of being elected, military leaders were not the most popularly supported when compared to the civilian candidates.

3.   Chuan's Second Term

Chuan Leekpai was the first prime minister to serve under the new constitution. While elections under the new constitution did not occur until 2001, Chuan was in charge of carrying out the changes laid out in the constitution. Following Chavalit's resignation on November 3, 1997, Chuan was re-appointed as prime minister just seven days later. He returned to power without an election, due to what some believe was the result of a backroom deal. Some speculate that the deal had Prem's fingerprints on it in order to ensure that an administration was put in power that was deemed acceptable by the network monarchy.[80] While Chuan was remembered as corrupt and untrustworthy due to the land reform scandal during his previous term, the network monarchy saw Chuan as the most acceptable choice as prime minister due to his traditional allegiance to the monarchy, continued relationship with Prem, and earlier reputation as a relatively clean politician.

Still, a topic of concern for the government and the citizens was the continued downward spiral of Thailand's economy. The new Chuan government needed to prove to its citizens that democracy could cope with an economic crisis and a military takeover was not the answer. The baht was still unstable and there was tremendous outflow of capital. Due to this the government had to allow high interest rates to bring down inflation. The government's budget was cut also in hopes of reining in inflation. The military was one of the areas cut during the economic crisis. The Chuan administration made it clear that the government was in arrears and that both civilian and military bureaucracies had no choice but to cut spending.

While the largest attention to budget cuts to the military was recognized during this period, decreases in its budget had been occurring since 1992. Army Commander

---

79 Paul Chambers, "U-Turn to the Past? The Resurgence of the Military in Contemporary Thai Politics," in *Democracy Under Stress: Civil Military Relations in South and Southeast Asia*, ed. Paul Chambers, Aurel Croissant (Bangkok: ISIS, 2010.), 70–71.

80 McCargo, "Network Monarchy and Legitimacy Crises in Thailand," 510–511.

General Wimol Wongwanich, following the aftermath of the 1992 "Black May" massacre, reluctantly agreed to a defense budget reduction for fiscal year 1993–1994.[81] Prior to 1992, debates related to the military budget were minimal, and budgets were usually approved with little change. The declining military budget continued through the mid-1990s and dropped to its lowest level during the financial crisis in 1997.[82] Although changes did occur for the fiscal year 1993–1994, it was not until the economic crisis occurred did the military have to defend the allocation of their budget to civilian leaders. Chuan, while holding the position of prime minister and defense minister at the same time, was able to convince the military leaders to set an example by allowing defense cuts at least equal to the average of other ministries. This was met with little resistance, as most of the cuts were aimed at reducing the size of the military, a task many military officers had been attempting to do for some time. Furthermore, as the military decreased in size, leaders anticipated that there would be more room for weapon modernization following the economic crisis. Other budget cuts included combat allowance amounts, decreases in military attaché positions, and proceeds made by military-owned radio and television stations.[83] The lack of heavy resistance to civilian oversight over the defense budget signaled to many that the military was not only professionalizing, but recognizing a new role of defending political stability during an economic crisis by setting the example of following democratic leader's decisions.

By the end of 1998, the baht had stabilized at a rate of 36 to the U.S. dollar (in January of that year, it had been as low as 56 to the dollar), and interest rates had fallen

---

81 Chambers, "U-Turn to the Past? The Resurgence of the Military in Contemporary Thai Politics," 88.

82 The percentage of the national budget allocated to the military declined from 1991 to 2005, when it began to rise again. However, it should be clarified that while the percentage of the national budget declined, the overall national budget increased from 1991 to 1997 leading up to the financial crisis. This meant that while the percentage of the budget given to the military went down, the actual amount given to the military increased over the years. See Paul Chambers "U-Tern to the Past…" 90–91. This may be one reason the military did not strongly resist the reductions. Another may be that declining military budgets were not uncommon globally following the end of the Cold War, especially for the victors.

83 James Ockey, "Thailand: The Struggle to Redefine Civil-Military Relations," in *Coercion and Governance: The Declining Political Role of the Military in Asia*, ed. Alagappa Muthiah (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.), 202.

from 20 to 11 percent.[84] While these numbers show that the economy was changing for the better, the economic recovery was slow. Support for the government among the Bangkok middle class remained stable. Many feared that if the Chavalit government had remained in power, the country would have gone into an even deeper economic malaise and believed that Chuan's administration provided more competent people to deal with the country's economic problems. However, many rural low-income Thais did not find the Chuan administration's performance acceptable. Many believed that the government was paying too much attention to the economic crisis, which hit banks and real estate owners especially hard, and not enough attention to the ongoing problems associated with the poor and rural provinces. Many small and medium-sized businesses went under in 1998, since few Thais felt safe spending or investing. Furthermore, unemployment continued to rise. Over the next year and a half, Chuan continued to pass reforms that helped improve Thailand's economy. However it was evident that despite small improvements, it would take several years to recover from the crisis.

Meanwhile, corruption scandals, again, surrounded Chuan during his term in office. While allegations, like last time, did not involve Chuan directly, his administration was tainted. On a positive note, the results of these scandals showed progress in institutional reforms made under the new constitution that aimed at keeping the government accountable. Within the Public Health Ministry, accusations made by the Rural Doctors Society concerned government purchase of drugs and equipment at inflated prices. After a three-month investigation, the newly formed National Counter-Corruption Commission concluded that corruption did exist, leading to the resignations of the Minister of Public Health and the Deputy Prime Minister. In another case, irregularities in the purchase of seeds in the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives led to the resignation of another Deputy Prime Minister. Both of these corruption scandals showed that traditional Thai politics, which usually was surrounded with corruption, would not be acceptable under the new constitution.

---

[84] Bunbongkarn, "Thailand's Successful Reforms," 63.

4.   The Rise of Thaksin Shinawatra

In November 2000, the Democrat-led government dissolved Parliament within the timeframe specified by the new Constitution.[85] The subsequent polls held in January 2001 marked the first elections to be held under the new constitution. Overall, the constitution brought about many of the changes the framers had sought. Most importantly, it sharply reduced the number of political parties represented in parliament. In the past about 43 parties competed for seats in parliament, which meant governments had to rely on shaky coalitions to remain in power. These often required repayment through choice appointments that provided opportunities for graft. Constitutional reformers viewed this as a source of instability and illegitimacy.

As a result of the changes they instituted, only 10 parties were left to compete in the elections in 2001.[86] One party nearly secured an outright majority. The Thai Rak Thai Party (TRT [Thais Love Thailand]), previously a small party, won 248 out of 500 seats. More importantly, several smaller parties formed a coalition with TRT that enabled its leader, Thaksin Shinawatra, to become the first prime minister ever to serve a full term in office. In that way, constitutional reforms had clearly succeeded – by reducing the number of parties, they had increased political stability.

The success of Thaksin Shinawatra and his TRT Party during the election was primarily based on securing the populist vote received from many poor Thai citizens.[87] While vote buying continued, putting baht immediately into the pockets of rural Thais, many provincial voters were attracted by Thaksin's proposed politics, especially in contrast to what they had received from the government in the past. During the TRT election campaign, Thaksin made many promises to pass specific policy initiatives that would help lower class Thais. For example, he promised Thai voters that he would pledge to charge just thirty baht[88] for a visit to a public hospital; to provide each village a

---

85 William Case, "Thai Democracy, 2001: Out of Equilibrium," *Asian Survey* 41, no. 3 (2001), 535.

86 In the 2005 elections only four parties competed.

87 Conversely, the Democrat Party focused its 2001 election on keeping loyal middle class citizens in Bangkok and traditional supporters in the south, alienating many rural constituencies. Case, "Thai Democracy, 2001: Out of Equilibrium," 536.

88 About 70 US cents.

microcredit fund of one million baht; and to give farmers a three-year moratorium on debt payments.[89] One of the reasons for his continued public support after taking office was due to the actual fulfillment of these pledges. Other policy initiatives included bureaucratic reforms aimed at improving customer service and accountability, decentralization and local elections, social welfare politics aimed at Thailand's rural poor, and a campaign against illegal drugs.[90]

While much of the rural, low-income public supported Thaksin as prime minister, the monarchy and military did not. Thaksin, with the support of his TRT Party within parliament and constitutional changes that empowered the executive branch, was able to push multiple initiatives through parliament and the bureaucracy with little resistance. Furthermore, Thaksin used his political power to pass many initiatives that were not supported by the network monarchy. Duncan McCargo summarizes Thaksin's changes:

> Thaksin set about systematically to dismantle the political networks loyal to Prem in a wide range of sectors, aiming to replace them with his own supporters, associates and relatives. Thaksin was seeking to subvert network monarchy, and to replace it with a political economy network…a network based on insider dealing and structural corruption.[91]

Thaksin also capitalized on a widespread Thai sentiment that the political elite, which he disingenuously claimed not to be a part of, was responsible for their suffering during the financial crisis and through deals made with the IMF. As Thaksin's power grew, the network monarchy could do little but watch the changes occur.

One of the changes he made was the dismantling of many Army-led security structures tasked with fighting the southern insurgency, such as the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre which had been created by Prem in the 1980s. Furthermore, Thaksin chose to replace the military with the police in the restive southern provinces, stating that the old insurgency had degenerated into mere banditry.[92] Thaksin,

---

89 Freedman, *Political Change and Consolidation: Democracy's Rocky Road in Indonesia, South Korea, and Malaysia*, 52.

90 Hicken, "The Politics of Economic Reform in Thailand: Crisis and Compromise," 382.

91 McCargo, "Network Monarchy and Legitimacy Crises in Thailand," 512.

92 Ibid., 514.

a former policeman himself, knew that if he kept the support of the police, he could use them as a way to prevent a possible military coup in the future.[93] He also employed the police in 2003 as a way to wage a "war on drugs" that led to at least 2,300 extrajudicial killings.[94] Other changes included becoming involved in the military promotion system, thus elevating trusted associates such the promotion of his cousin as commander-in-chief of the army, ahead of others in line or considered more qualified.[95] Paul Handley states,

> During 2004–5, Thaksin appeared to reject criticism from the king and Prem over the government's brutal crackdown on Muslim dissent in southern Thailand…Thaksin also appeared to defeat the king and Prem in a battle of wills over filling top military and government positions. The palace seemed increasingly anguished and hostile over Thaksin's eclipse of royal power and prerogative.[96]

The reach of Thaksin's power was evident to the network monarchy: while it had the power to help oust prime ministers in the past who were not supported by the monarchy, such as Banharn Silpa-archa and Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, Thaksin was just too strong. This proved to be a great threat to the traditional role of the network monarchy. Forced to work with a prime minister whose power was unprecedented, the network monarchy realized not only did it have to pick its challenges carefully, but as Thaksin's political system strengthened, the network monarchy would have to find a way to survive.[97]

For the first time in Thai history, a prime minister had served his full term in office, and in the 2005 election, Thaksin and his TRT Party won in a landslide victory.

---

93 Thitinan Pongsudhirak, "Thai Politics After the 6 February 2005 General Election." *Trends in Southeast Asia Series*: 6(2005), (Singapore, ISEAS, 2005), 3.

94 Some claim the number killed in the three-month 2003 campaign to be closer to 3,000, followed by a less well known second "war on drugs" in 2005 that allegedly claimed another 1,000 lives. Thaksin pledged to eradicate illegal drugs by 2005. The military and police were given almost free reign on how to accomplish this goal, consequently leading to many human rights violations. However, the campaign was very popular with Thai citizens, leading to few significant challenges to the extrajudicial tactics employed. See Amy Freedman, "Political Change and Consolidation…" 52–53.

95 Thitinan Pongsudhirak, "Thailand's Uneasy Passage," *Journal of Democracy* 23, no 4. (2012), 48; Pongsudhirak, "Thai Politics After the 6 February 2005 General Election," 3.

96 Paul Handley, *The King Never Smiles: A Biography of Thailand's Bhumibol Adulyadej*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 444.

97 McCargo, "Network Monarchy and Legitimacy Crises in Thailand," 516.

Spectators began asking not only if Thaksin would complete another full term, but how many terms in office he would serve.[98] The election outcome was the largest margin of victory in Thailand's history, with the TRT Party obtaining 377 out of the 500 parliamentary seats, a clear majority even before coalition deals were brokered. It seemed that the influence of the changes made by the 1997 constitution to reduce the number of competing parties found in the traditional fragmented parliamentary system had worked. Aurel Croissant states:

> The trend is from highly fragmented individual political parties towards deepening polarization between two larger political parties with different political platforms and clearly distinguished groups of voters. While the 2001 election intensified this development, the 2005 election has consolidated it.[99]

The effects of the 1997 constitution decreased the number of parties competing in an election from 43 to 10 by the 2001 election.[100] By the 2005 election, the number of overall parties that had a realistic chance of winning seats had decreased to four.[101]

Following the 2005 election, serious concerns arose that the Thaksin regime had begun to erode the mechanisms and principles of democracy even as they had jettisoned him to power. Opposition politicians, academics, journalists, and middle-class Bangkokians began to wonder if Thaksin had been undermining democratic elements in order to consolidate and maintain power. Suspicions were confirmed when members of Thaksin's family sold Shin Corporation, their flagship company, for $1.9 billion tax free.[102] The newly formed civil society-opposition group, The People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD), began protesting against Thaksin's administration. Most members of the PAD were Bangkok middle class citizens, who believed in democratic ideals and the

---

98 Freedman, *Political Change and Consolidation: Democracy's Rocky Road in Indonesia, South Korea, and Malaysia*, 52.

99 Aurel Croissant, Daniel Pojar Jr., "Quo Vadis Thailand?: Thai Politics After the 2005 Parliamentary Elections," *Strategic Insight* 4, no. 6 (2005), 6.

100 Hicken, "The Politics of Economic Reform in Thailand: Crisis and Compromise," 5.

101 Croissant and Pojar, "Quo Vadis Thailand?: Thai Politics After the 2005 Parliamentary Elections," 6.

102 James Ockey, "Thailand in 2006: Retreat to Military Rule," *Asian Survey* 47, no. 1 (2007), 134.

traditional patriarchic role of the monarchy in Thai politics. Identified by their bright yellow shirts symbolizing the color of the monarchy, they accused the prime minister of abuse of power, insulting the monarchy, policy corruption favoring sectional interests, human rights abuses, and interference in the independent agencies of the state.[103] As opposition spread around the country and protests grew within Bangkok, at the end of February Thaksin called for snap elections to be held on April 2, 2006.

The snap elections were an attempt to shore up his legitimacy by demonstrating once again that a strong majority of Thais wished him still to be prime minister. While anti-Thaksin sentiment was strong in the capital city and southern Thailand, Thaksin had tremendous support from the poor majority who lived in rural areas in the north and northeast. Opposition parties, led by the Democrat Party, attempted to block Thaksin's reelection by boycotting the election and encouraging voters across the country to select the "no vote" option.[104] The Democrat Party also called on Thaksin to resign so that a new royally appointed government could temporarily assume office to initiate a round of political reforms.[105] Post-election evidence emerged that showed the TRT Party provided support to small parties to ensure competition, causing a complaint to be filed with the Election Commission by a leader of the Democrat Party.[106]

King Bhumibol, under pressure to intervene, called on the courts to examine the matter further, stating that the recent events were not in accordance with democracy.[107] In May, the election was annulled by the Constitutional Court. Tensions heightened shortly thereafter, as many Thais wondered how the next set of elections would be

---

103 Michael K. Connors, "Thailand–Four Elections and a Coup," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 62, no. 4 (2008), 483.

104 Ockey, "Thailand in 2006: Retreat to Military Rule," 134; According to the Thai constitution, any candidate who faced no competition was required to win at least 20 percent of the vote. Areas in the south that did not support the TRT Party would be the most important element in lowering the vote-generated legitimacy claims of the TRT Party. For those candidates who faced a competitor, there would not be a 20 percent requirement. This meant that the strategy of the TRT Party became to either obtain the 20 percent of the vote without a competitor, which was easier in the north, or, for areas in the south, ensure they had a competitor.

105 Connors, "Thailand–Four Elections and a Coup," 483.

106 Ockey, "Thailand in 2006: Retreat to Military Rule," 134.

107 Connors, "Thailand–Four Elections and a Coup," 483.

conducted. Many in the military, monarchy, PAD, and Democrat Party claimed Thaksin's refusal to step down after the elections were invalidated was reason enough to demand his removal. They also feared that Thaksin could win the majority once more. It was clear that there was a polarization in Thai politics beginning to deepen between those for and those against Thaksin's continued power in government.

5.   The 2006 Military Coup d'état

After 14 years of democratic consolidation, the return of the military to overt politics occurred with a bloodless coup on September 19, 2006. Reasons for the coup included, "Thaksin's meddling with democratic institutions, his unprecedented polarization of society, his actions bordering on *lese majeste*, and his corrupt behavior."[108] According to Federico Ferrara, the military stepped in, "not merely to unseat Thaksin, but perhaps especially to lay the groundwork for his prosecution, confiscate his assets, dismantle those provisions in the 1997 constitution that protected his dominance, and put new safeguards in place against his return."[109] The military claimed that Thaksin's caretaker government was planning a bloody crackdown on the PAD during the scheduled rally the next day.

This event highlights a new peak of polarization within Thai politics. While polarization had been forming in the 1990s, the rise of Thaksin, paired with the way he challenged traditional Thai politics and new democratic institutions, resulted in an even stronger divide.[110] While the military had been losing its traditional role in politics, the network monarchy, led by Prem, was able to ensure that military and royal interests were heard and supported by the government. Throughout Thaksin's term he challenged the traditional role of the network monarchy, resulting in the military becoming involved in politics again through a coup. As the PAD protested in Bangkok, the military saw a way to act under the legitimacy of the monarchy to remove Thaksin from power. This is

---

108 Kuhonta, "The Paradox of Thailand's 1997 'People's Constitution': Be Careful What You Wish For," 374.

109 Ferrara, "Thailand: Minimally Stable, Minimally Democratic," 524.

110 Some claim that polarization was evident with the communist insurgency, which had supports in the student-led pro-democracy movement and among the rural poor. Both entered contentious politics with violent and nonviolent protest in the 1970s.

supported by a speech Prem gave to cadets at the military academy in which he stated that the military pledges its allegiance to the King, not the government. It was clear that a divide was forming with Thaksin as the catalyst. On one side were the TRTs, Thaksin, the police, and his populist support from Thais in the low-income provinces of the north and northeast; on the other side were the military, monarchy, and the PAD, who represented most of the Bangkok middle and upper class.

C. CONCLUSION

Reflecting over the period between 1992 and 2006, while democratic consolidation seemed evident in Thailand, this period actually reflects the weakening of democratic institutions and values. In 1992, Freedom House rated Thailand as "Partly Free" and continued to do so until the passing of the 1997 constitution, which boosted the country in 1998 to be rated as "Free."[111] Thailand continued to be rated as "Free" until 2005 when political instability arose following the election of Thaksin to his second term as prime minister. However, these ratings fail to register the rising political instability, vote buying, continued corruption, extrajudicial killings, media control, and manipulation of the courts and monitoring bodies between 2001–2005. The polarization contributed to the weakening, not the consolidation, of democracy within Thailand during this period. Furthermore, despite the positive ratings being associated with the passing of a new democratic constitution, many academics argue that the constitution actually laid the foundations for an eventual military coup and subsequently the downgrading.[112]

Constitutional reforms were intended to increase political stability by reforming many elements within the Thai government. The traditionally fragmented parliamentary system was replaced by new rules that incentivized political parties to merge. Furthermore, new institutions were created to provide more accountability in hopes of creating a strong checks-and-balances system. Lastly, under the new constitution senators

---

111 Patrick Ziegenhain, "Military Influence on the Regression of Democracy in Southeast Asia," *European-Asian Journal of Law and Governance* 1, no. 2 (2011), 264.

112 Hicken, "Party Fabrication: Constitutional Reform and the Rise of Thai Rak Thai."; Kuhonta, "The Paradox of Thailand's 1997 'People's Constitution': Be Careful What You Wish For."; Ockey, "Change and Continuity in the Thai Political Party System."

would be required to be elected rather than appointed. The result of this change was the continued decrease in military senate seats.

Civil-military relations also changed during this period. The military, while their traditional participation in politics continued to decline, supported the passing of a democratic constitution. In 1998, Army Chief General Chetta Thanajaro reaffirmed the military's commitment to supporting democracy stating, "The coup d'état is outdated. The more time passes, the more it's obsolete…soldiers must stay completely away from politics – no involvement in the formation of governments, no criticism."[113] Chai-Anan Samudavanija claims that the military had to make fundamental changes in the way it operated within Thai politics, stating, "As long as parliamentary democracy continues to provide the formal rules of the political game and conventional coup-making is therefore less feasible, military leaders and their cliques have to realign themselves with the leaders of political parties, and be seen to be non-political or, at least, non-partisan."[114]

However, the military's view of coups would eventually shift back to pre-1991 days by the mid-2000s. The first election under the new constitution in 2001 brought to power, with the help of the post-financial crisis hangover, the TRT Party. This newly formed party was the most successful at absorbing many small parties that had the possibility of not surviving the first round of elections under the new constitution. This led to the TRT becoming the majority within the parliament and, resultantly, strengthened Thaksin's power within government. While challenged by traditional political and military elites, his power was too strong for many to maintain their traditional role in Thai politics. At the height of his power during the 2005 elections, the network monarchy, supported by the Democrat Party and the newly formed PAD, sought to rid Thaksin of his control within the government.

These divides depict the sharp deepening of political polarization within Thailand that had been forming since 1992. Following the 1991 coup and the "Black May" massacre, the military lost its legitimacy in Thai politics. Resultantly, they looked to

---

113 Case, *Politics in Southeast Asia: Democracy or Less,* 286.

114 Chai-Anan Samudavanija, "Old Soldiers Never Die, They Are Just Bypassed," in *Political Change in Thailand: Democracy and Participation*, ed. Kevin Hewison (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 1997), 55.

retired General Prem as a way to maintain their institutional autonomy. Prem, as head of the monarchy's Privy Council, was able to represent the network monarchy through his relationship with prime ministers and the King. Members of the Democrat Party were usually supportive of the King, leading Prem to develop bonds with Chuan and ensure that the monarchy's and military's interests were met in Thai politics. Prime ministers who were not members of the Democrat Party, such as Banharn Silpa-archa and Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, faced a more difficult time in office and only lasted a year or two.

Thai society during this time period was also becoming polarized. It is clear that on one side was the Bangkok middle class, which wanted a strong democratic government, which also would preserve the role of the monarchy, and, on the other side, Thais in the low-income provinces who appreciated the populist changes Thaksin's government offered. Throughout the elections in the 1980s and early 1990s, it is apparent that the role of the Thai citizen in government decisions was increasing. Furthermore, the 1997 constitution aimed at having more public input into new laws and procedures within the Thai government, something that had never happened in Thai history. Changes to the government included more elected leaders and fewer appointed ones. Throughout the 1990s and into the early 2000s it is evident that while the Bangkok middle class was the most politically aware, the majority low-income Thais outside the city center would come to rule election outcomes. Incentivized to vote either by vote buying or by populist promises by candidates, voter participation in the rural provinces increased under the new constitution. As Thaksin pursued populist changes and rallied the low-income workers around the country, he was able to obtain an outright majority in government, challenging traditional Thai politics and angering the Bangkok middle class and establishment.

Leading up to the 2001 elections, it is apparent that a divide was forming in politics and in society. A new peak in polarization formed with Thaksin as prime minister. He chose to use his political power to challenge the traditional role of the monarchy, Prem, and the military within Thai politics and society. However, he had not only a majority in parliament, but a large amount of support from rural areas in the north and northeast. In Bangkok, though, middle class citizens saw Thaksin as corrupt and untrustworthy. As the PAD held mass protests against his election win in 2005, it seemed

that Thaksin would win again in the snap elections through his mass support outside the capital. Before the elections were complete, however, the military, supported by the monarchy, conducted a military coup, removing Thaksin from office and the country but not from influence in Thai politics.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

III.   POLITICAL INSTABILITY 2006–2011

A.   INTRODUCTION

From the military coup in 2006 to the election of Yingluck Shinawatra in 2011, the political instability created by political and social polarization did not go away. In this time period, efforts to re-stabilize Thai politics through a new constitution, military transfer of governmental control back to Thai citizens, and new elections, resulted in frequent changes in government, mass protests, and increased polarization. While Freedom House upgraded its rating of Thailand from "Not Free" to "Partly Free" following elections in 2007, continued political instability kept the country from being rated as "Free" like it was from 1998–2005.[115] Deep divisions between Red and Yellow Shirt ideologies depict societal polarization throughout Thailand, resulting in continued political instability. The 1997 constitutional changes that encouraged a two-party system also contributed to further political polarization during this time period. This chapter will show that while the military conducted a coup in order to oust Thaksin and restore democracy within Thailand, the time period that followed continued to weaken Thai democracy.

B.   FROM MILITARY RULE TO YINGLUCK 2006–2011

1.   The Council for National Security

The military took control of the government on September 19, 2006. That evening, military leaders traveled to Chitlada Palace, where they met with the King, Queen, and Prem to voice their reasons for the coup and plans for the future. Despite little evidence pointing to the monarch's role in the coup, there is little doubt that the military saw itself as acting in the service of the King. Soldiers around Bangkok could be seen wearing yellow arm bands, and tanks had yellow ribbons on their barrels. It was evident that following the coup, the military was aligned with the monarchy, and the future

---

115 Patrick Ziegenhain, "Military Influence on the Regression of Democracy in Southeast Asia," *European-Asian Journal of Law and Governance* 1, no. 2 (2011), 264.

decisions made while it was in power would ensure that the traditional role of the network monarchy in Thai politics would not be shored up.

Its main focus was the restoration of stability in Thai politics. However, in order to do so, the military and monarchy, along with their supporters, needed to make changes to the governmental system. The election, originally set for October, was delayed a year, and public gatherings and political party activity were proscribed and the constitution was suspended. The senate and the parliament were also dissolved. While some supporters, such as the PAD, saw these as necessary steps toward creating a democratic regime that was less corrupt, the military leaders found themselves facing international and domestic condemnation for their overthrow of an elected government. However, the military continued to defend their choice to conduct a coup, and continued to look for a new prime minister who could restore democracy.

While in control, the military capitalized on its power, reversing many unfavorable changes imposed by Thaksin. The military budget, which had been declining since 1992, saw an increase of 34 percent.[116] While the military saw the largest cuts during the 1997 financial crisis, these cuts had never been restored once the economy recovered. Other changes included reinstating Prem's Southern Border Provinces Administration Center, and reviving the military's political role in the fight against the Malay-Muslim insurgency. Further changes favored by the military were included in the new 2007 constitution, addressed later in this chapter.[117]

The military did not wish to have the lack of legitimacy it experienced following the 1991 coup and "Black May" massacre. Therefore, it attempted to shore up its popularity by continuing most of Thaksin's populist programs. The much supported health care program received even more praise as the military chose to make the 30 baht medical care free.[118] The military junta, officially called the Council for National Security (CNS), promised the Thai people that a civilian government would be

---

[116] Ockey, "Thailand in 2007: The Struggle to Control Democracy," 26.

[117] Ibid., 25–26.

[118] Ockey, "Thailand in 2006: Retreat to Military Rule," 139.

established within a year of the coup. In order to accomplish this, a new constitution had to be drafted that met the requirements of the military and monarchy.

2.   The 2007 Constitution

Less than a year after the coup, on August 19, 2007, a public referendum approved a new constitution. With members appointed by the military, the Constitutional Drafting Assembly (CDA) took six months to create the final draft. Despite the attempt of the military to create a legitimate constitution, concerns about the military's influence over the drafting process began before it even started. The selection of the CDA was influenced by the military and the royal networks behind them. The list of 200 candidates who were later a part of the CDA did not include farmers and laborers. Rather candidates were drawn mainly from the urban elites who represented traditional bureaucratic civilian and military interests associated with the Thai monarchy.

Members of the CDA were responsible for selecting 25 members to be formed into the Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC). Critical leadership positions with the CDA and CDC were given to those who were supportive of the military junta and the monarchy. This led to a one-sided group of individuals that took part in the drafting of the new constitution, mainly composed of "the royal military bureaucratic circle and anti-Thaksin academic counterparts."[119] The alienation of certain groups, mainly Thaksin supporters, added to the polarization that divided those who supported an active political role for the military and monarchy, and those who did not.[120]

The goal of the military and their civilian allies in drafting a new constitution was to counter the developments made by the 1997 constitution that led to Thaksin's consolidation of power. More specifically, the changes aimed at reducing the influence of the rural and urban majority in the electoral process.[121] In order to achieve this, the military had to ensure that those involved in the process were sympathetic to their cause. Jim Ockey states, "The new constitution met opposition both from activists who saw it as

---

119 Dressel, "Thailand's Elusive Quest for a Workable Constitution: 1997–2007," 304.

120 Ibid., 302–303.

121 Ibid., 299–300.

less democratic than the 1997 document and from supporters of Thaksin, who treated it as a referendum on the coup. The military, on the other hand, saw the referendum as providing legitimacy for its actions."[122]

Changes to the constitution aimed at preventing any similar concentration of political power that Thaksin had while in office. First, an eight-year term limitation was placed on the prime minister's term in office. While the 1997 constitution was designed to strengthen the executive branch and improve the fragmented parliament system by giving more power to the prime minister and parties, the new constitution aimed at restoring some power to individual elected representatives. Other changes included "The threshold for a vote of no confidence was lowered; the size of the National Assembly was reduced from 500 to 480; and members of parliament (MPs) no longer have to give up their seats in order to join the cabinet."[123] The new constitution also revamped the senate, requiring that only half of the senate would be elected, leaving the other half to be handpicked by members within government.[124]

While the 2007 constitution overturned the provisions in the 1997 constitution that had led to the centralization of power within the executive, many people argued that the 2007 constitution marked a clear step backward from democracy. Unlike the drafting of the 1997 constitution, which involved public consultation, the military control of the drafting process in 2007 led to minimal public participation and support.[125] Once the draft was completed, it was sent out to over 20 million households for review prior to a vote. Billboards read: "Love the King. Care about the King. Vote in a Referendum. Accept the 2007 Draft Charter."[126] Despite having the public vote on passing the constitution, the military left almost no room for anyone to vote "no." CDC Secretary

---

122 Ockey, "Thailand in 2007: The Struggle to Control Democracy," 23.

123 Ibid., 21.

124 The half of the senate that is not elected can be chosen by the presidents of the Constitutional Court, the Election Commission, the Ombudsmen, the National Counter Corruption Committee, the State Audit Commission, a judge of the Supreme Court of Justice, or a judge from the Supreme Administrative Court.

125 Dressel, "Thailand's Elusive Quest for a Workable Constitution, 1997–2007," 305.

126 Ibid., 306.

Somkid Lertpaitoon threatened that if the new constitution was not passed, a prior constitution approved before 1997 would be reinstated. Those who voiced their opposition to the constitution were met with heavy resistance from the military, which passed last-minute legislation that imposed heavy fines and even jail sentences against those agitating against the draft.[127] Most resistance to the new constitution was found in the north and northeast, known for their support of Thaksin and the now-disbanded TRT Party. Thirty-five provinces within these areas remained under martial law leading up to the referendum. While the draft was approved by 57 percent of the country, the actions taken by the military to ensure that the constitution was passed with limited public debate were seen by many as undemocratic.[128]

3. Political Polarization – Yellow Shirts Protest

From October 2006 to January 2008, Surayud Chulanont, a former army chief and member of the King's Privy Council, served as the interim prime minister.[129] The first elections held after the coup occurred in December 2007. Following the dissolution of the TRT, a new party named the Phalang Prachachon Party (People's Power Party [PPP]) was formed. The party was known for being loyal to Thaksin, and, like the TRT Party in 2001, was able to form a strong coalition party that was capable of winning the most seats in parliament with 233 out of 480. The leader of the party, Samak Sundaravej, was elected as prime minister and took office in January 2008.

Prior to the elections Samak announced that, "I am a nominee of Prime Minister Thaksin, I will make the party strong so that democracy can be restored in this country."[130] Should he win, he promised that he would amend the military-backed constitution and support an amnesty for politicians, like Thaksin, who had been banned from politics. The threat of having a proxy government run by Thaksin led Democrat Party member Chaiwat Sinsuwong to bring legal action against the PPP. His argument

---

127 Ibid.

128 Ibid.

129 Thitinan Pongsudhirak, "Thailand Since the Coup," *Journal of Democracy* 19, no. 4 (2008), 145.

130 William Case, "Electoral Authoritarianism and Backlash: Hardening Malaysia, Oscillating Thailand," *International Political Science Review* 32, no. 4 (2011), 452.

was that the PPP was essentially the same party as the banned TRT Party, thus violating electoral rules. The legality of the issue proved to be complicated, as the PPP received millions of votes based on the TRT connection. Before receiving a court ruling, Democrat Party leaders, who were opposed to the case, were able to convince Chaiwat to withdraw his case, leading him to quit the party shortly after.[131]

Just over a month after Samak took office term, Thaksin returned to Thailand on February 28. Using Samak as a proxy, Thaksin was able to weave his way back into politics. Foreseeing a possible change to the constitution that might allow Thaksin to return to politics officially, in March the PAD reassembled and planned to conduct protests beginning in May.[132] In July, Thaksin and his wife went to trial for a series of charges for tax evasion, which led to the first verdict finding his wife guilty. However, the couple was allowed to leave the country to attend the 2008 Olympics in Beijing. Following the conclusion of their trip to the Olympics they chose not to return, causing the Supreme Court to issue arrest warrants on both.

Rather than declare victory, the PAD chose to continue to protest, arguing that Thaksin should pay for his crimes and the government should be dissolved so that a government not allied to Thaksin could be elected.[133] On August 26, PAD leader Sondhi Limthongkul led supporters in a rally deemed "the last whistle blow." The plan was to block government buildings, major roads, and two airports in an effort to convince the government to dissolve. While the PAD hoped to gain 300,000 protesters, numbers were much smaller, closer to 30,000. Nevertheless, the PAD successfully blocked streets and occupied several government buildings, to include the Government House, which displaced the prime minister from his office. On August 29, PAD members occupied international airports in Phuket, Krabi, and Hat Yai, causing many flights to be

---

131 Duncan McCargo, "Thailand: State of Anxiety," *Southeast Asian Affairs* (2008), 346.

132 Bertil Lintner, "A Thailand Riven by Politics," *Far Easter Economic Review* 171, no. 7 (2008), 13.

133 Jim Ockey, "Thailand in 2008: Democracy and Street Politics," *Southeast Asian Affairs* (2009), 322.

canceled.[134] In response to the protests, Samak stated, "I, the prime minister, have come to office in the righteous way and I won't resign…I will not back down. I will rule this country and lead it through all of the problems."[135]

On September 9, the Constitutional Court in a 9–0 decision ruled that Samak had violated the constitutional ban against outside employment after he participated on two television cooking shows. This event highlighted that institutions that Thaksin did not control could be used against him and his supporters. The court stated that due to the violation, the cabinet and prime minister had to leave office. Despite an opportunity for Samak to be reappointed by his own party, the PPP chose to appoint Somchai Wongsawat under the assumption that without Samak, the political crisis would end. Under advisement from Thaksin, Somchai, married to Thaksin's younger sister Yaowapha, was appointed as prime minister. The PAD, rather than seeing Samak's departure from government as a victory, chose to continue to protest, again stating that their goal was to root out all Thaksin influence in government and to continue to oppose pending constitutional amendments that could allow Thaksin to return to politics.[136]

The PAD chose to go on the offensive again, this time blocking MPs inside parliament. When police came to clear a path for those inside to exit, violence erupted. By the end of the riot, two protesters were left dead and over 400 were injured. The deaths of the PAD members were blamed on the police, and popular sentiment, at least among the middle and upper class, swung against the government. The monarchy also chose to show its support for the PAD protesters, as the Queen established a medical aid fund for those injured and attended the funeral of one of the protesters. Her actions had a profound impact on the PAD, as the Queen's assistance was viewed as indicating royal support for their cause.

---

134 Sutin Wannabovorn, "Pressure Grows on Thai Prime Minister to Resign," USA Today, August 30, 2008. http://www.usatoday.com/news/topstories/2008-08-30-29584765_x.htm

135 Ibid.

136 Ockey, "Thailand in 2008: Democracy and Street Politics," 323–324.

On October 21, 2008, Thaksin was found guilty by the Supreme Court of corruption and sentenced him, in absentia, to two years in jail.[137] The United Front of Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD), also known as "Red Shirts," was formed shortly after the conviction of Thaksin. They were Thaksin supporters who opposed the Yellow Shirts and the 2006 military coup. In a large stadium in Bangkok, 80,000 Thaksin supporters gathered for the first time to hear from Thaksin via a phone call. Following the event, demonstrations began to occur around the country as Thaksin supporters voiced their support of the current government and the hopeful return of their former prime minister. As pro-Thaksin rallies increased, tension increased between UDD and PAD demonstrators. Episodes of violence between the two groups became frequent, several involving bombings.

As the UDD strengthened, the PAD began to prepare for what its leaders called "the last battle." On November 24, PAD supporters gathered to implement the "King Taksin Operation."[138] The plan was to force the unconditional resignation of Prime Minister Somchai by seizing parliament; the Finance Ministry and other financial centers; the Don Muang airport; and the Suvarnabhumi international airport.[139] The police, military, and monarchy did not issue statements or intervene. In the end, the activist Constitutional Court intervened and chose to release its decision on the PPP and two other parties' alleged vote-buying case.[140] The ruling was against the supporters of Thaksin, as all three parties were ordered to be dissolved and their executives, to include Somchai, to be banned from political participation for the next five years. While the PAD

---

137 Ian MacKinnon, "Former Thai PM Thaksin Found Guilty of Corruption," *The Guardian*, October 21, 2008. http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/oct/21/thaksin-thailand-corruption (accessed August 1, 2012)

138 King Taksin the Great, before an attack on Chantaburi in 1767, ordered his troops to break all the rice bowls and pots in an effort to motivate them win the battle so that they could eat again.

139 Later reports would show that the occupation of the airport stranded over 350,000 travelers and cost the country 290 billion baht, equivalent to three percent of GDP. See Phongpaichit and Baker's "Thaksin" 340-342.

140 House Speaker Yongyuth Tiyaphairat, a member of the PPP, was convicted of electoral fraud in July 2008, giving grounds for the courts to dissolve the PPP. The Election Commission had ruled in favor of the dissolution and the final decision was up to the Constitutional Court.

claimed victory, they stated that "if the new government was not to its liking, it would again take control of the airports, deeming the heavy economic cost as a small price to pay in defense of nation and king."[141]

4.   Political Polarization – Red Shirts Protest

After the PPP was dissolved, the Democrat Party became the majority party within parliament and, subsequently, placed their leader as prime minister. On December 17, 2008, Abhisit Vejjajiva, an Oxford graduate, was selected to take the office of prime minister. Pledging in his swearing in ceremony speech to defend the monarchy, Abhisit came to power mainly through the support of the network monarchy and his ability to win over parties that had originally sided with Thaksin. This was mainly due to the lobbying of Army Commander General Anupong Paochinda. With a Democrat Party member as prime minister who was accepted by traditional elites, some scholars feared that some of the nondemocratic elements present in Thai politics in the 1990s would return. Chairat Charoensin-o-larn states that the appointing of Abhisit marked a return of the "old nam nao (polluted) type of dirty/money politics typical in Thai politics…."[142] To make matters worse, allegations of widespread corruption tainted Abhisit's administration. While leaders of the 2006 coup had used corruption as the main reason for ousting Thaksin, the Democrat Party government, backed by the military, did not receive any pressure from the military. Chairat even points out that the media did not pay much attention to the corruption, stating, "The only corruption that gets attention is that which is linked to Thaksin and his proxy governments."[143]

In late February 2010, UDD plans surfaced for a mass protest against the Abhisit government. While the movement laid low as long as Thaksin's supporters were in power, the appointment of Abhisit caused them to become increasingly active.[144] The intent of the protest was to mobilize a million Thais in Bangkok and help convince the

---

141 Ockey, "Thailand in 2008: Democracy and Street Politics," 327; Ibid., 326–327.

142 Chairat Charoensin-o-larn, "Thailand in 2009: Unusual Politics Becomes Usual," *Southeast Asian Affairs* (2010), 303.

143 Ibid., 315.

144 Erick Cohen, "Blood in the 'Red Shirts' Protests in Bangkok," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 43, no. 2 (2012), 220.

government to step down and call for new elections. The Red Shirts believed that Abhisit's government was illegitimate because it was not based on the majority party, rather a coalition formed under military pressure.[145] The earlier success of the PAD in bringing down the PPP illuminated the notion that, with enough public pressure, it was possible to change the nature of Thai government. Other aims of the UDD included the reinstating of the 1997 constitution, which would effectively dissolve all the legal and political changes imposed after the 2006 coup. In an interview with the *New York Times,* a UDD leader stated, "Our aim is to topple the government, force them to make a choice between suppressing us and stepping down."[146] Starting on March 12, Red Shirts walked around Bangkok, performing symbolic protests such as the pouring of 1,000 liters of protestors' blood at Parliament and Abhisit's house. For two weeks they protested without incident, and at the end of March, the government offered to sit down with UDD leadership to discuss a possible compromise.[147]

While both sides hoped that a possible resolution could be reached, negotiations failed due to disagreement over a new election date. The Red Shirts called for the dissolution of the current administration within two weeks, while the government offered a nine-month deadline. The failure of negotiations caused tensions to rise between the two sides. On April 7, UDD members stormed Parliament, causing the government to declare a state of emergency. Under a state of emergency, the military was given the power to restore order, causing the mood of the protesters to switch to a high expectation of violence. On April 10, the military and UDD clashed, leaving five soldiers and over 20 Red Shirts dead. While UDD members hoped that the protests that began in March would lead to political change, the expectation of change increased following the bloody clash in April. However, it was not until May that the Abhisit government would reach out to the UDD leadership again to meet for new negotiations.[148]

---

145 Ibid., 220.

146 "Thailand Braces for Political Rallies in Capital," *New York Times*, 11 March 2010.

147 Michael Connors, "Thailand's Emergency State: Struggles and Transformations." *Southeast Asian Affairs* (2011), 292.

148 Connors, "Thailand's Emergency State: Struggles and Transformations," 293–294.

The government offered to have elections in November, and provided a "Roadmap to Reconciliation" that included social and economic reform along with an independent probe into the April violence. The response from the UDD was divided. While at the meeting they chose to accept the offer, those who opposed the agreement argued later that the roadmap document allowed the Democrat Party to maintain certain powers within government that could undermine the new government. Thaksin agreed with those who opposed the offer, and urged the UDD to continue its rallies in the capital. Violence increased in May, leading to many more deaths. On May 13, Major General Khattiya, a military leader who allied himself with the Red Shirt protesters, was assassinated.[149] Over the next week, gunshots and explosions could be heard around Bangkok. Reports by May 19 showed over fifty civilians had died during the mass protests.[150]

One year later, on May 9, 2011, Abhisit announced that elections would take place in July, six months earlier than scheduled. This event is important, as it marked Abhisit's willingness to accede to the demands of the protesters, albeit on his own schedule. The death of civilians the prior year and continued small-scale protests led Abhisit to make the decision that it was time to allow the country to choose its leaders again in a new democratic election. In a press conference the prime minister stated, "It is again a new start for people to move Thailand forward and to solve various problems of people and their families efficiently under democratic means."[151] The election marked the possible decline of polarization within Thai politics.

5. Yingluck Elected as Prime Minister

On August 5, 2011, Yingluck Shinawatra, a sister of Thaksin, was voted into office as the first female prime minister in Thai history. The newly formed Pheu Thai Party (PTP) was the latest Thaksin-supporting party, following the banning of the

---

149 Gen Kyattiya was also known as "Seh Daeng" or "Commander Red" among UDD members.

150 Connors, "Thailand's Emergency State: Struggles and Transformations," 294.

151 Kocha Olarn, "Thailand heads for new elections after protests," CNN World News, DATE. http://www.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/asiapcf/05/09/thailand.politics/ index .html (accessed November 29, 2011).

previous two. The PTP was able to obtain 296 seats in the 480 seat parliament, giving Yingluck a cushion of support as she entered office. Despite being an obvious proxy for her older brother, as indicated by his primary role in picking almost her entire cabinet, Yingluck is at a significant disadvantage as prime minister. She does not have any experience in Thai politics. This means that she has to rely on the experience and advice of her party and her brother. Others, though, such as the Red Shirts, believe that she will bring a fresh approach to many issues and lead Thailand to a new era of stability and democracy.

Shortly after her election, Yingluck faced her first challenge as prime minister in October with what many called a 100-year flood. In an attempt to protect the capital, a series of dikes and runoff channels were formed to drive water around the city. But water still found a way to get into the city, eventually leading to extensive flooding that caused the domestic airport to close and numerous people to vacate their homes. Yingluck, a political novice, attempted to work with members of the Thai bureaucracy and military resolve the natural disaster. Interagency conflicts, lack of policy coordination among cabinet members, and perceived protection of Bangkok at the expense of central Thai rural provinces left the opinion of the government weak.[152] Media outlets claimed that Yingluck's leadership style is tainted with a tone of uncertainty and disorganization. However, her day-to-day devotion to flood management and disaster relief earned her some public sympathy, allowing her to emerge from the crisis with heightened stature and confidence.

C.   CONCLUSION

The time period between 2006 and 2011 represents a time in which Thailand's democracy was nearly destroyed. Despite the military returning control of the government to civilian in 2007, Thai politics remained sharply polarized between those who supported Thaksin, and those who did not. Polarization was strong before the 2006 coup, then escalated following it, resulting in mass protests turning violent. The ousted Thaksin was able to maintain his influence in politics through proxy prime ministers,

---

152 Pongsudhirak, "Thailand's Uneasy Passage," 50.

escalating tension between elected governments and the military that ousted Thaksin, the monarchy that was challenged by Thaksin, and the PAD that viewed Thaksin as anti-democratic. Despite the TRT being dissolved by the courts, Thaksin-supporting parties, such as the PPP and the PTP, were able to maintain a majority in government like the TRT had done prior to the 2006 coup.

However, while pro-Thaksin parties were able to gain popular support, those who opposed the government, such as the PAD, military and monarchy, set out to return royalist elites to power. The social polarization that had been evolving since the 1990s peaked with mass protests within the 2006–2011 period. On one side was the Bangkok middle class, organized under the royalist group known as the PAD. The other side was composed of Thaksin-loyal farmers and low income workers united under the UDD. Through mass protests, seizures of government buildings and transportation hubs, these two groups were able to influence the government. Through mass protests, governments were pressured to dissolve their parliaments and allow new elections to occur. Once victory was achieved and the PAD, monarchy, and military-supported Democrat Party took power in government, the protest pendulum shifted to the UDD. Mass demonstrations broke out again, calling for yet another change of government. From 2007–2011, a span of just four years, the government changed leaders five times. It is clear that instability in Thailand between 2006 and 2011 was the result of increased social and political polarization.

The military throughout the Yellow Shirt and Red Shirt protests gave a clear message as to which side it supported. Two civilian governments, led by Samak and Somchai, gave orders to the military to stop the PAD's siege of Government House and the airports in 2008, only to be refused by military leaders. Rather than stop the PAD protesters, military members recommended that the government either resign or dissolve the parliament. On the other hand, when Red Shirt protests broke out during the Songkarn riot in April 2009, military members were more than willing to become involved. These

reactions to protests by both the Red and Yellow Shirts depict a military that, while it claims to not wish to be involved in politics, clearly shows which side of the political polarization line it stands on.[153]

As a result of the political and social polarization, instability in Thai politics remained apparent throughout 2006 to 2011. While the military successfully returned the power of the government back to the civilians, attempting to restore democracy within Thailand, the government remained unstable for the next several years. However, with Abhisit's resignation from office in 2010 and Yingluck's election into power, mass protests have been on a decline. With a popularly elected prime minister, despite her ties to Thaksin, the PAD has been more focused on thwarting the return of Thaksin into the country rather than trying to drive Yingluck from office. What remains unknown, though, is if the polarization has decreased enough for stability to return to Thai politics.

---

[153] Charoensin-o-larn, "Thailand in 2009: Unusual Politics Becomes Usual," 324.

IV.   CONCLUSION

A.   INTRODUCTION

The Thai democratization process was filled with many constructive and destructive events between 1992 and 2011. While scholars saw the period from 1992–2006 as a time in which democratic components within Thailand were forming, it is clear that due to polarization within Thai politics and society that democracy had not been consolidated. Following the 2006 military coup that ousted Thaksin from office, polarization increased even further, resulting in mass protests and frequent changes in government. Despite democratic elections in 1992 and the hope of many Thai citizens and politicians that Thailand would democratize, as of 2012 it has not fully democratized. This chapter aims to highlight the main points presented in chapters two and three that show how political polarization destabilized democracy in Thailand and undermined progress toward democratic consolidation. Furthermore, this chapter will also discuss the implications of political and social polarization for the democratization of Thailand in the future.

B.   CONCLUSIONS AND FINDINGS

1.   1992–2006

Between 1992 and 2006, there appeared to be widespread evidence that democracy was being consolidated in Thailand. Following the "Black May" massacre in 1992, the military was forced to step back from its traditional overt role in politics. As the military returned to its barracks, the new democratically elected government, led by Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai, was able to incorporate many changes into Thai politics that depicted democratic consolidation. Changes included strengthening civilian control of the military, changing the voting laws to encourage a larger turnout, creating an administrative court system, reducing the size of the appointed Senate, and improving equality for women.[154] While corruption, vote buying, and frequent changes in

---

[154] Neher, "Democratization in Thailand," 208.

government continued to exist throughout the mid-1990s, the implementation of a new constitution in 1997 gave a clear sign to many that Thailand was on the right path toward consolidating its democracy.

Several new accountability institutions such as the Election Commission, National Counter-Corruption Commission, and the Constitutional Court were formed in an effort to decrease corruption and vote-buying. More members of government now had to elected rather than be appointed, leading to a further decrease in the number and percent of military members in parliament. The separation between politics and the military, a fundamental requirement for a democracy, was apparent throughout the 1990s, pointing to the possibility that Thailand's democracy was consolidating. Another constitutional change aimed at replacing Thailand's fragmented party system with one with a much smaller number of parties represented in elections and parliament. This was accomplished by incentivizing the formation of coalition parties. The thought was that if parliament had fewer parties, there would be greater stability and staying power. As a result of these constitutional changes, many believed that Thailand was on the right track toward consolidating its democracy.

In retrospect, it is evident that the democratic changes implemented by the new constitution laid the foundation for continued political instability and the overall weakening of democracy. Thaksin's TRT Party was able to form a large coalition of parties and almost obtain a majority in parliament in the 2001 election and succeed in doing so in 2005. By promising reforms that would support lower income citizens, Thaksin remained popularly supported. With strong electoral legitimacy and solid support in parliament, Thaksin was able to challenge the traditional role of the network monarchy in politics. While the network monarchy was able to limit the influence of previous prime ministers whose interests did not align with those of the monarchy or military, Thaksin's power was too great for them to control.

Following the 2005 election, PAD protesters, composed of the Bangkok middle class, stormed the streets of Bangkok, calling for Thaksin to step down as prime minister. They accused the prime minister of abuse of power, insulting the monarchy, policy corruption favoring sectional interests, human rights abuses and interference in the

independent agencies of the state.[155] At the height of the protests, the military stepped in and conducted a coup d'état that removed Thaksin from power. Overall, this time period reflects a sharp increase in polarization within Thai society and politics, reaching a new peak with the removal of Thaksin. Democratic elements, such as the introduction of a new constitution, while thought to point to a consolidated Thai democracy, failed to prevent the weakening of democracy caused by the evolving polarization between the Bangkok middle class, which supported the PAD, and the low income citizens in the north and northeast, who had voted for and continued to support Thaksin and the TRT Party. Furthermore, divides between those who supported the network monarchy, such as the Democrat Party, and those who did not, such as Thaksin and the TRT Party, added to the political polarization that culminated in the 2006 coup.

2.   2006–2011

Between 2006 and 2011, political and social polarization reached a peak. Divides between those who supported Thaksin and those who did not led to five changes in government, mass protests, and, at times, violence. While the military returned the power of the government back to civilians in 2007, politics remained unstable. Thaksin, living abroad, remained an influential figure in Thai politics through proxies. Red Shirts remained loyal to Thaksin, believing that he was removed from power undemocratically and that he should return to power since he was popularly elected. Those who opposed Thaksin, the militarily and royally supported Yellow Shirts, believed that Thaksin was a corrupt leader who threatened the proper working of democracy and the traditional role of the monarchy and should not be allowed to return to Thai politics.

The social polarization led to mass protests that had a direct impact on the stability of Thai politics. If a Yellow Shirt-supported government was in power, the Red Shirts went to the streets in mass protests, calling for new elections. If a Red-Shirt-supported government was in charge, the Yellow Shirts went to the streets, calling for the same thing. Furthermore, while certain leaders were convicted and accused parties were dissolved by new institutions formed by the 1997 constitution and the courts, social

---

155 Michael K. Connors, "Thailand–Four Elections and a Coup," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 62, no. 4 (2008), 483.

groups took responsibility for the overthrow of governments they opposed. Many believed that if they did not like who was in power, their nonviolent mass street protests could influence change in Thai politics. As Kuhonta states, "Not only was political stability overrun by political hegemony and authoritarian practices, but ultimately the polity became deeply unstable as Thai society became sharply polarized."[156]

3.   1992–2011

Reflecting over the time period 1992–2011 it is evident that polarization in both Thai politics and society caused enormous instability in Thailand. The rise of the PAD in 2006 and their continued presence in Bangkok throughout the next several years weakened the democratic consolidation process within Thailand. While the Yellow Shirts do not wish Thaksin or any Thaksin-supporting party to return to power, at the same time they voiced their support for democracy in Thailand. While Thaksin still enjoys popular support, and was democratically elected in 2001 and 2005, he was removed from office undemocratically on the grounds that he was corrupt and challenged the traditional roles of the monarchy and military. Despite calling for snap elections in 2005 and still winning a majority of votes, the Yellow Shirts, the monarchy, and the military did not want him in power. Rather than waiting for elections to occur a few years later and trying to rally popular support for the Democrat Party, Yellow Shirts protested and called for Thaksin's removal from office. The military, despite becoming more professionalized and less involved in politics since the early 1990s, chose to intervene and remove a democratically elected prime minister from power. The PAD and its supporters hailed the coup as a step forward for democracy. However, the international community and Red Shirts saw the coup as a clear step away from democracy. The unwillingness of the Bangkok middle class to accept the outcome of democratic elections and the military and monarchy's unwillingness to have a prime minister in power who was not aligned to their traditional views and practices led to a coup.

---

156 Kuhonta, "The Paradox of Thailand's 1997 'People's Constitution': Be Careful What You Wish For," 376.

C.   IMPLICATIONS

Political polarization peaked with the mass protests between the Red and Yellow Shirts, and since Yingluck took office in 2011 through election, polarization has decreased. While Yingluck is Thaksin's sister, hinting at possible political conflict of interest, she has tried to avoid direct confrontations with her political opponents. While many wonder if she will help bring her brother back, she has not announced any plans to do so. Rather, she has promoted a reconciliation bill that aims to give amnesty to those involved in illegal activity during the mass protests starting in 2006. While the details of the reconciliation bill are still being debated, it is possible that if it is passed, Thai society could become less polarized.

Of course, given the volatility of the situation, it is possible that political instability could increase in the future. There are many influential leaders who could have a divisive impact on Thai politics. First, Thaksin still remains abroad, and as of September 2012, has not returned to Thailand. While not in the country, he has maintained the support of the Red Shirts, is still a large focus of much of Thai media, regularly broadcasts messages to his supporters, and is in close cooperation with and provides financial support to political allies within and outside the Pheu Thai Party. Many believe that Yingluck is a proxy for her older brother, and that the PAD will begin to protest in an attempt to rid the government of Thaksin's influence. However, over the last year, while the PAD continued to voice its opposition to Thaksin's proxy government under Yingluck, they have yet to stir enough public support for enough social mobilization to influence political change like they had in the past. However, if Thaksin returns to Thailand, polarization is quite likely to increase, resulting in mass protests and further political instability. The courts and judicial authorities are insisting that he serve time in jail for his corruption convictions, and his detention are certain to cause protests calling for his release.

Directly related to the possibility of Thaksin's return is the highly debated national reconciliation law. Some MPs are of the opinion that the amnesty should cover all those involved in illegal acts, starting from nonviolent protests carried out by either side since in 2006, to violent protests by the UDD in 2010 and afterward. An MP from

the ruling Pheu Thai Party, Surapong Towichukchaikul, stated, "For the country to achieve reconciliation, all parties should forgive. We should stop playing politics or our country will go nowhere."[157] He, along with many other members of the PTP believe that if the country reconciles, Thaksin will be able to return, and the country can move away from the past and toward a more united future. This stems from the belief that as long as Thaksin continues to receive attention by not being in Thailand, the country cannot reconcile its past and move forward. Thaksin supporters have even petitioned the King for an amnesty for Thaksin alone, an effort that his highly unlikely to come to fruition.

Other MPs think the amnesty should not cover protestors or former government leaders. Democrat Party leader Abhisit Vejjajiva said his party was not trying to block reconciliation but was taking a stance against attempts being made to whitewash offenses committed under the law. Abhisit stated, "As I see it, Thaksin is doing everything he can to elude his punishment and this is not reconciliation."[158] Many Yellow Shirts believe that Thaksin should not be pardoned for his abuse of power and that at a minimum, he should serve the sentence of two years in prison that was about to be issued by the Supreme Court before he fled the country. Thitinan Pongsudhirak says it best when discussing Thai opinions of Thaksin: "Thaksin's name is synonymous with divisiveness. In deeply polarized Thailand, mentioning him seems to rouse either love or hate; few are lukewarm."[159] In this way, a reconciliation bill that allows Thaksin to return, whether with or without amnesty, would contribute to further instability.

The King has also remained an influential leader in Thai politics and society. While it is evident that he seeks to preserve his traditional role in politics and has supported a gradual, peaceful transition to democracy, the introduction of democracy has decreased his influence. As the same time, he is still supported by the military and PAD, whose members believe that the monarchy should always play an important role in

---

157 "Thaksin can return once reconciliation law goes into effect," *The Nation*, April 18, 2012. Accessed April 18, 2012. http://www.nationmultimedia.com/politics/Thaksin-can-return-once-reconciliation-law-goes-in-30180156.html

158 "Reconciliation push will wait for charter change," *The Nation*, April 19, 2012. Accessed April 18, 2012. http://www.nationmultimedia.com/politics/Reconciliation-push-will-wait-for-charter-change-30180231.html

159 Pongsudhirak, "Thailand's Uneasy Passage," 58.

politics and society. Thitinan believes that finding the right balance between democratic elements and a government that incorporates the monarchy will be the key to future stability in Thai politics. He states, "Thailand cannot escape the challenge of reaching a new consensus that will root the monarchy more squarely within the constitution of an emerging democracy, but in a way that reconciles conservative royalists."[160] At the same time though, many wonder how much longer the King will reign. Now 84 years of age, the King has suffered from serious illnesses over the last several years. Many wonder how much longer he will be alive, and how the monarchy and the Kingdom will be affected by his passing.

General Prem has been an influential figure in Thai politics since the 1980s. However, since the September 2006 coup, it appears he has become less so. By the summer of 2006, Prem had become a main target for Thaksin supporters, who labeled him Thailand's leading anti-democratic force. On July 14, 2006, Prem stated:

> In horseracing, horse owners hire jockeys to ride horses. The jockeys do not own the horses. They just ride them. A government is like a jockey. It supervises soldiers but the real owners are the country and the King. The government supervises and employs us…What I mean is that we are the county's soldiers. Governments come and go.[161]

It is evident that Prem believes that the military will continue to be a part of Thai politics. Furthermore he continues to stress to the military that their allegiance is to the King, not to the civilian government. These two elements highlight threats to Thailand's democracy in the future. Prem is now 92 years of age. Many wonder how the Privy Council will run without him in charge and how the network monarchy will function without his leadership. His passing will certainly be felt politically.

Overall, it seems that Thai politics will only become stable when a political system is created that can accommodate the mobilized social forces within it. Currently, the military and monarchy pose two of the greatest threats to democracy. Ferrara states, "The extraordinary lengths to which the palace and the military have gone to preserve

---

160 Ibid., 57.

161 Chambers, "U-Turn to the Past? The Resurgence of the Military in Contemporary Thai Politics," 63.

their extra-constitutional prerogatives suggest that these institutions remain the foremost impediment to Thailand's democratization, as well as the greatest threat to the stability of the country."[162] Without a political system that allows the military and monarchy to preserve their interests while at the same time allowing democracy to flourish, instability will always be possible.

Through reconciliation of past political actions, a newly defined role for the monarchy in Thai democracy, and civilian control of the military, stability is possible in the future. Furthermore, accountability institutions must continue to expose and disqualify those who continue to use vote buying to become elected, or are corrupt while in office. While low income citizens might be less concerned about corruption within government, it is possible that if less corruption exists, the Bangkok middle class might be more supportive of non-Democrat Party leaders. With these necessary changes unlikely in the short to mid-term, instability will continue to exist in Thailand.

---

162 Ferrara, "Thailand: Minimally Stable, Minimally Democratic," 525.

LIST OF REFERENCES

Albritton, Robert. "Thailand in 2005: The Struggle for Democratic Consolidation." *Asian Survey* 46, no. 1 (2006): 140–147.

Albritton, Robert, Thawilwadee Bureekul, "Developing Electoral Democracy in Developing Nations: Thailand." *A Comparative Survey of Democracy, Governance and Development.* Asian Barometer Project Office, 2004.

BBC News. "Profile: Thailand's Reds and Yellows." BBC News. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8004306.stm (accessed November 29, 2011).

Beeson, Mark, Alex J. Bellamy, and Bryn Hughes. "Taming the Tigers? Reforming the Security Sector in Southeast Asia." *The Pacific Review* 19, no. 4 (2006): 449–472.

Bunbongkarn, Suchit. "Elections and Democratization in Thailand," in *The Politics of Elections in Southeast Asia.* edited by R.H. Taylor, 184–200. Stanford: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1996.

———. "Thailand's Successful Reforms." *Journal of Democracy* 10, no. 4 (1999): 54–68.

Case, William. "Electoral Authoritarianism and Backlash: Hardening Malaysia, Oscillating Thailand." *International Political Science Review* 32, no. 4 (2011): 438–457.

———. *Politics in Southeast Asia: Democracy or Less.* London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002.

———. "Thai Democracy, 2001: Out of Equilibrium." *Asian Survey* 41, no. 3 (2001): 525–547

Chachavalpongpun, Pavin. "'Unity' as a Discourse in Thailand's Polarized Politics." *Southeast Asian Affairs* (2010): 332–342.

Chambers, Paul. "Thailand on the Brink: Resurgent Military, Eroded Democracy." *Asian Survey* 50, no. 5 (2010): 835–858.

———. "The Challenges for Thailand's Arch Royalist Military." New Mandala: New Perspectives on Mainland Southeast Asia (blog). June 9, 2010. http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/newmandala/2010/06/09/the-challenges-forthailand's-arch-royalist-military/-_ednref2. Accessed February 10, 2010.

———. "U-Turn to the Past? The Resurgence of the Military in Contemporary Thai Politics." *In Democracy under Stress: Civil-Military Relations in South and Southeast Asia.* eds. Paul Chambers and Aurel Croissant. Bangkok: ISIS, 63–101.

———. "Where Agency Meets Structure: Understanding Civil-Military Relations in Contemporary Thailand." *Asian Journal of Political Science* 19, no. 3 (2011): 290–304.

Charoensin-o-larn, Chairat. "Thailand in 2009: Unusual Politics Becomes Usual." *Southeast Asian Affairs* (2010): 302–331.

Cohen, Erick. "Blood in the 'Red Shirts' Protests in Bangkok," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 43, no. 2 (2012): 216–233.

Connors, Michael K. "Liberalism, Authoritarianism and the Politics of Decisionism in Thailand." *The Pacific Review* 22, no. 3 (2009): 355–373.

———. "Thailand–Four Elections and A Coup." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 62, no. 4 (2008): 478–496.

———. "Thailand's Emergency State: Struggles and Transformations." *Southeast Asian Affairs* (2011): 287–305.

Croissant, Aurel, Marco Bunte. *The Crisis of Democratic Governance in Southeast Asia*. New York: Palgrave and Macmillan, 2011.

Croissant, Aurel, Daniel Pojar Jr. "Quo Vadis Thailand? Thai Politics After the 2005 Parliamentary Elections." *Strategic Insight* 4, no. 6 (2005). http://www.nps.edu/Academics/centers/ccc/publications/OnlineJournal/2005/Jun/ croissantJun05.html. Accessed February 13, 2011.

Croissant, Aurel, David Kuehn, and Philip Lorenz. "Breaking with the Past?: Democratic Change and the Quest for Civilian Control in East Asia." *East West Center Policy Studies* 62, (2012): 1–86.

Department of State. "Background Note: Thailand." U.S. Department of State. http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2814.htm (accessed November 27, 2011).

Diamond, Larry. "Is the Third Wave Over?" *Journal Of Democracy* 7, no. 3 (1996): 20–37.

Dressel, Bjorn. "Thailand's Elusive Quest for a Workable Constitution, 1997–2007." *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs* 31, no. 2 (2009): 296–325.

Ferrara, Federico. "Thailand: Minimally Stable, Minimally Democratic." *International Political Science Review* 32, no. 5 (2011): 512–528.

Freedman, Amy. *Political Change and Consolidation: Democracy's Rocky Road in Indonesia, South Korea, and Malaysia*, Gordonsville, VA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

Handley, Paul. "Princes, Politicians, Bureaucrats, Generals: The Evolution of the Privy Council under the Constitutional Monarchy." 10th International Conference on Thai Studies. Thammasat University Bangkok. Jan 2008.

———. *The King Never Smiles: A Biography of Thailand's Bhumibol Adulyadej*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006.

Hewison, Kevin. "Political Oppositions and Regime Change in Thailand," in *Political Oppositions in Industrialising Asia*. edited by Garry Rodan, 72–94. London: Routledge, 1996.

Hicken, Allen. "Late to the Party: Institutional Reform and the Development of Partisanship in Thailand." (working paper prepared for the Ruling Politics Conference, Harvard University, November 21–22, 2011)

———. "Party Fabrication: Constitutional Reform and the Rise of Thai Rak Thai." *Journal of East Asian Studies* 6, no. 3 (2006): 381–407.

———. "Stuck in the Mud: Parties and Party Systems in Democratic Southeast Asia." *Taiwan Journal of Democracy* 2, no. 2 (2006): 23–46.

———. "The Politics of Economic Reform in Thailand: Crisis and Compromise." William Davidson Institute Working Paper Number 638, University of Michigan Business School, January 2004.

Kuhonta, Erik. "The Paradox of Thailand's 1997 'People's Constitution': Be Careful What You Wish For." *Asian Survey* 48, no. 3 (2008): 373–392.

Laothamatas, Anek. "A Tale of Two Democracies: Conflicting Perceptions of Elections and Democracy in Thailand," in *The Politics of Elections in Southeast Asia*. edited by R.H. Taylor, 201–223. Stanford: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1996.

Lee, Terence. "The Armed Forces and Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Explaining the Role of the Military in 1986 Philippines and 1998 Indonesia." *Comparative Political Studies* 42, no. 5 (2009): 640–669.

Leightner, Jonathan. "Globalization and Thailand's Financial Crisis." *Journal of Economic Issues* 33, no. 2 (1999): 367–373.

Lintner, Bertil. "A Thailand Riven by Politics." *Far Easter Economic Review* 171, no. 7 (2008): 12–14.

Linz, Juan J., Alfred Stepan. *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

McCargo, Duncan. "Alternative Meanings of Political Reform in Contemporary Thailand." *Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies* 13, no. 1 (1998): 5–30.

———. "Democracy Under Stress in Thaksin's Thailand." *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 4 (2002): 112–126.

———. "Network Monarchy and Legitimacy Crises in Thailand." *The Pacific Review* 18, no. 4 (2005): 499–519.

———. "Thailand: State of Anxiety." *Southeast Asian Affairs* (2008): 333–356.

Murphy, Colum. "For King and Country?" *Wall Street Journal*, September 21, 2006, Eastern Edition.

Murray, David. "The 1995 National Elections in Thailand: A Step Backward for Democracy?" *Asian Survey* 36, no. 4 (1996): 361–375.

Mydans, Seth. "Thai Civics: New Leader, but Votes Are Still for Sale - New York Times." *The New York Times*. http://www.nytimes.com/1996/11/19/world/thai-civics-new-leader-but-votes-are-still-for-sale.html?ref=chavalityongchaiyudh (accessed November 27, 2011).

Neher, Clark. "Democratization in Thailand." *Asian Affairs* 21, no. 4 (1995): 195–209.

The New York Times. "Thailand Braces for Political Rallies in Capital." *New York Times*, 11 March 2010. http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/12/world/asia/12thai.html

O'Connor, Andrew C. "Why Thailand's Military Stepped In." Master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2011.

Ockey, James. "Change and Continuity in the Thai Political Party System." *Asian Survey* 43, no. 4 (2003): 663–680.

———. "Thailand in 2006: Retreat to Military Rule." *Asian Survey* 47, no. 1 (2007): 133–140.

———. "Thailand in 2007: The Struggle to Control Democracy." *Asian Survey* 48, no. 1 (2008): 20–28.

———. "Thailand in 2008: Democracy and Street Politics." *Southeast Asian Affairs* (2009): 315–333

———. "Thailand: The Struggle to Redefine Civil-Military Relations," in *Coercion and Governance: The Declining Political Role of the Military in Asia*. edited by Muthiah Alagappa, 187–208. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.

———. "Variation on a Theme: Societal Cleavages and Party Orientations Through Multiple Transitions in Thailand." *Party Politics* 11, no. 6 (2005): 728–747.

Olarn, Kocha. "Thailand heads for new elections after protests." CNN World News. http://www.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/asiapcf/05/09/thailand.politics/index.html (accessed November 29, 2011).

One World Nations Online. "History of Thailand." Guide to the Countries of the World: Nations Online Project. http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/History/Thailand-history.htm (accessed November 27, 2011).

Pike, John. "February 1991 Coup." Global Security. http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/thailand/coup-1991.htm.

Pongsudhirak, Thitinan. "Thai Politics After the 6 February 2005 General Election." *Trends in Southeast Asia Series*: 6(2005). (Singapore, ISEAS, 2005).

———. "Thailand Since the Coup." *Journal of Democracy* 19, no. 4 (2008): 140–153.

———. "Thailand's Uneasy Passage." *Journal of Democracy* 23, no. 2 (2012): 47–61.

Prasirtsuk, Kitti. "From Political Reform and Economic Crisis to Coup d'état in Thailand: The Twists and Turns of the Political Economy, 1997–2006." *Asian Survey* 47, no. 6 (2007): 872–893.

Pridham, Geoffrey, Philippe Schmitter. "The Consolidation for Democracies: Processes, Rhythms, Sequences, and Types." in *Transitions to Democracy: Comparative Perspectives from Southern Europe, Latin America and Eastern Europe*, Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1995.

Punyaratabandhu, Suchitra . "Thailand in 1997: Financial Crisis and Constitutional Reform." *Asian Survey* 38, no. 2 (1998): 161–167.

———. "Thailand in 1998: A False Sense of Recovery." *Asian Survey* 39, no. 1 (1998):80–88.

Samudavanija, Chai-Anan. "Old soldiers never die, they are just bypassed," in *Political Change in Thailand: Democracy and Participation*, edited by Kevin Hewison, 42–57. London: RoutledgeCurzon, 1997.

Serra, Narcís. *The Military Transition: Democratic Reform of the Armed Forces*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Schedler, Andreas. "What is Democratic Consolidation." In *The Global Divergence of Democracies.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001, 149–164.

Shenon, Philip. "Thai Government Collapses In a Land-Reform Scandal." The New York Times. http://www.nytimes.com/1995/05/20/world/thai-government-collapses-in-a-land-reform-scandal.html (accessed November 27, 2011).

Tungsupvattana, Ake. "Political-Institutional Changes and De-democratization in Thailand," Political Studies Association, April 2011.

Thailand For You. "Who is Banharn Silpa-archa." Who's Who in Thai Politics. http://www.th4u.com/banharn_silpa-archa.htm (accessed November 27, 2011).

"Thailand: Military Coup 2006." *Asian Human Rights Commission* (2006).

———. "World News: Thailand." *The New York Times*. http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/thailand/index.html (accessed November 30, 2011).

U.S. Congressional Research Service. "Thailand: Background and U.S. Relations." (RL32593; Dec. 8, 2011), by Emma Chanlett-Avery.

Vrooman, Roger. "The Role of Political and Economic Factors in Thailand's Last Two Coups D'état." Master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2007.

Wannabovorn, Sutin "Pressure Grows on Thai Prime Minister to Resign." *USA Today*, August 30, 2008. http://www.usatoday.com/news/topstories/2008-08-30-29584765_x.htm (accessed August 2, 2012)

Ziegenhain, Patrick. "Military Influence on the Regression of Democracy in Southeast Asia," *European-Asian Journal of Law and Governance* 1, no. 2 (2011): 263–275.

INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST

1.   Defense Technical Information Center
        Ft. Belvoir, Virginia

2.   Dudley Knox Library
        Naval Postgraduate School
        Monterey, California

3.   Michael Malley
        Naval Postgraduate School
        Monterey, California

4.   Sandra Leavitt
        Naval Postgraduate School
        Monterey, California